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Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia



Domestic Abuse Strategy

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Foreword

- ▶ 15,409 domestic abuse crimes in West Mercia in 2018/19.
- ▶ Two women a week are killed nationally.
- ▶ Domestic violence related killings at a five year high nationally.
- ▶ 20 domestic violence related killings in West Mercia between April 2014 and March 2019.

These are just a snapshot of the statistics which show that domestic abuse is devastating - too many lives are experiencing this behaviour on a daily basis. We must remember that the statistics will only tell part of the story; many other people will have been living with the violence and fear day in day out for months and years.

In my Safer West Mercia plan 2016-21¹, I set out some key areas of focus, which included putting victims and survivors first and tackling those crimes which cause the most harm to our communities. This document sets out my long term plan to tackle domestic abuse. This is not something that we can fix on our own or overnight. It is a long and complex process but one which I am 100% committed to.

We, as a society, cannot continue to just accept this behaviour as a fact of life. Victims, survivors, their children and loved ones deserve better; better help at the time of crisis to be kept safe, better help to cope and recover from the trauma, better support from the criminal justice system to bring those responsible to justice and better action to drive this horrible crime from our society.

Domestic abuse takes many forms and is not just physical. For another person to have control over where you go, who you see, how much money you have, what you wear is not right. Everyone has a right to make their own choices and live freely. Survivors tell us that the highest proportion of abuse experienced is emotional. This often makes it difficult for people to recognise, even those who are the victim of it.

Domestic abuse is **never** acceptable or justified on any occasion.

Through national campaigns, the profile of domestic abuse has been raised across the country in the last few years. Many organisations have worked hard to ensure more people are aware of what domestic abuse is and how they can spot signs, and ultimately support those who are suffering. Successful government ministers have also increased the focus and heightened behaviour in this area. Whilst this work is great, **more needs to be done**. It is my commitment as Commissioner locally to transform the local response and to join up the state and the public.

To really tackle domestic abuse we have to look at the root cause and challenge perpetrator behaviour. If we don't, perpetrators will continue the abuse or make the decision to move onto another victim and cause further harm. The question often asked is "Why doesn't the victim just leave?". I want to change this focus and instead encourage people to consider "Why doesn't the perpetrator stop?".

The cycle of abuse **must** be broken and this will only happen by working together; professionally, personally, as a society, and as a community.

There are many improvements that I want to drive in relation to domestic abuse; I want to make sure that people recognise when it is happening. I want to challenge perceptions, and not only raise awareness of the issue itself, but raise awareness and highlight all forms of this behaviour. I don't want people to stand by when they see domestic abuse, I don't want people to feel like they have no other options and I don't want perpetrator behaviour to continue. I don't want people to have a stereotypical perception of domestic abuse - we know that it can and does, happen to anyone.

I want to see that any victim or survivor of domestic abuse gets equal access to services to help them to cope and recover. I want to see less children affected, I want to see improvements in the criminal justice process, and I want to see organisations understanding that the needs of the whole family must be identified and addressed. I am committed to investing in provisions to achieve this. I want to spend **more** money, **more** effectively, to achieve **better** results.

Part of my role is to hold West Mercia Police to account and I will continue to do this to ensure that their response to domestic abuse continues to develop, and equally, I will ensure that the police have multiple options available to them for which they can identify and challenge the perpetrator and provide support to victims and children. I want to ensure that those on the front line in policing have as much support and challenge to make sure that the first contact is the last contact.

My key focus areas will be around prevention, supporting recovery, working together and challenging perpetrator behaviour. Change will not happen overnight, nor will it happen easily. I am fully committed to ensuring that change does happen in West Mercia, and that victims and survivors remain at the heart. I will ensure that the voice of the survivors and children are at the forefront of any actions within the work that I or my team do.

Ultimately, I want people to have the freedom to choose how they live their life and for that life to be safe, healthy and happy. For this, we **must** work together and we **must** work smarter.



John Campion
West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

1. Introduction

Domestic Abuse is seen nationally as a widespread, under-reported, abhorrent issue which destroys lives and creates significant harm.

In terms of costs of domestic abuse, in the year ending 31 March 2017, domestic abuse was estimated to have cost over £66 billion in England and Wales.

£47b

The biggest component of the estimated cost is the physical and emotional harms incurred by victims (£47 billion)².

17%

In West Mercia for the 2018/19 year, domestic abuse offences accounted for 17% of all offences recorded.

As set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan 2016-21³, I am committed to reducing harm and protecting our most vulnerable people, putting victims and survivors first. Domestic Abuse is just one of the biggest crimes which affects our society day in, day out.

This strategy has been developed to set out my strategic approach to tackling Domestic Abuse in West Mercia. The strategy aims to:

- identify the scale and impact of domestic abuse both nationally and locally;
- review national strategies and legislation to inform my PCC priorities around domestic abuse and how these will be delivered locally;
- identify best practice when commissioning services to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse;
- provide recommendations to develop the response to domestic abuse in West Mercia.

2. The survivor voice

Victims and survivors should be at the heart of any domestic abuse strategy and this strategy is no different. My office recently conducted some consultation work with survivors in West Mercia and the results have been incorporated into my strategic vision set out in section 4. Some key points from the consultation can be found below^[4]:

- survivors stressed the need to be believed and taken seriously, particularly emphasised by the male survivors;
- 87% of the survivors had children and reported the impact of the abuse on their children included; fear, anxiety, attachment issues, low confidence/self-esteem, self-harm, isolation, sadness, anger, confusion, mental illness (including being sectioned) and nightmares;
- help was only sought when the situation was at crisis/emergency point, at the point at which they realised they were experiencing domestic abuse, the latter being particularly true for those not being physically abused;
- 25% of participants would have liked help for the abusive partner to change their behaviour;

- most survivors indicated that it would be effective to work with young people in schools to tackle attitudes early and that more resources were needed to safeguard children and young people;
- more training is required around the manipulative behaviours of perpetrators and the challenging of attitudes in the local community;
- more joint working and joint agency communication is required; both to service users as well as between the services;
- the whole systems family and agency approach that has begun to be rolled out across West Mercia should continue;
- there is a continued need for public awareness campaigns about domestic abuse and specialist services, as well as a need for training for local people, particularly important for rural areas.

“ ... 87% of the survivors had children and reported the impact of the abuse on their children included; fear, anxiety, attachment issues, low confidence/self-esteem, self-harm, isolation, sadness, anger, confusion, mental illness (including being sectioned) and nightmares ... ”

3. The PCC's vision for tackling domestic abuse

To contribute towards my aim of delivering a Safer West Mercia, protecting domestic abuse victims from harm and tackling offending behaviour, I will focus on four key areas:

Preventing violence and abuse

Provision of services

Partnership working

Pursuing perpetrators

Key areas of my strategy are set out below.

Preventing violence and abuse

I will:

- work to ensure that less lives are blighted by domestic abuse;
- collaborate with a range of partners to identify earlier opportunities to support victims and children;
- focus my work and investment around early intervention and prevention to stop the problem at source;
- hold West Mercia Police to account for their service and performance around domestic abuse;
- work with partners to challenge domestic abuse perpetrators and hold them to account for their behaviour;
- increase and encourage awareness of reporting domestic abuse;

- work with communities to ensure that the public act when they identify domestic abuse and that it is seen as everyone's responsibility.

Recommended actions

- I will ensure that any PCC commissioned specialist domestic abuse services and the West Mercia Diversionary Network services are aligned to ensure a holistic package of support is offered to children and young people.
 - I will continue to have oversight of the implementation and evaluation of domestic violence risk assessments for children through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and consider sharing across West Mercia, if the evidence base shows effectiveness, for local implementation.
 - I will work with the Early Help Partnerships and other partners across West Mercia to explore wider identification of children who are affected by domestic abuse, linking in with the Operation Encompass programme.
 - I will hold the force to account to ensure they have a robust data capturing system which allows clear identification of numbers of children in households where domestic abuse is present through the Operation Encompass programme.
 - I will work with local authority and other partners to understand if there is a need for specialist services which address young people's violence and abuse.
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- I will conduct further research into effective prevention programmes working with young men and boys to inform future commissioning.
 - I will hold the force to account to proactively seek opportunities to trial the implementation of improved identification and intervention tools such as the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Risk Assessment tool (DASH).
 - I will work with the force and partners to develop a programme of domestic abuse awareness raising activity, to include specifically targeted areas of focus and adapting materials accordingly (males, BAME communities, older people, young people).
 - I will continue to work with local and national partners to explore implementation of multi-agency models which focus on domestic abuse and the needs of the whole family in West Mercia, sharing best practice and evidence bases accordingly.
 - I will work with partners in health to share best practice around the IRIS model and work with Public Health and CCG commissioners to explore joint commissioning opportunities where appropriate.
 - I will include perpetrator interventions (both adult and young perpetrators) in the domestic abuse commissioning plan.
 - I will ensure that recommendations from national strategies are taken into account when commissioning perpetrator interventions and where funding is allocated to a perpetrator programme, that they are only those who have been awarded Respect accreditation.
 - I will work with West Mercia Police, Youth Justice Service and other partners to consider the recording of adolescent to parent violence (APVA) on local systems to create an understanding of need.
 - I will work with Youth Justice Service and the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards, to explore opportunities for commissioning services for young people displaying perpetrator behaviour, as well as training for professionals.
 - I will work with Worcestershire Public Health and other partners to explore possible joint commissioning opportunities for the provision of holistic domestic abuse provision to be implemented from April 2021, linked to the Drive project.
 - I will ensure that my team see sight of the evaluation of the Shropshire perpetrator programme and work with the local CSPs to inform future perpetrator provision, recognising that local areas may have different demands.
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Provision of services

I will:

- give victims a platform upon which they can share their views;
- commission high quality services which are aligned to national best practice;
- work together with partners to identify opportunities to jointly commission services for the whole family;
- challenge and expose fragmented approaches to funding for services;
- champion consistency and security of funding for domestic abuse services amongst partners and government;
- work with the Victim Advice Line and other partners and service providers to ensure a seamless pathway of service provision for victims of domestic abuse;
- challenge West Mercia Police to seek every opportunity to identify the right support services for victims.

Recommended actions

- I will work with partners to conduct consultation work specifically with children who have been affected by domestic abuse (both as a witness and a victim) to ensure their voice is heard and to inform service provision/need.

- I will ensure that the design principles endorsed by government for the provision of domestic abuse services are incorporated into the PCC's DA Commissioning Plan.
- I will ensure that the needs assessment identifies the demand for specialist services working with all domestic abuse victims and survivors, including those groups who are marginalised or hidden within services.
- I will use my convening powers to ensure that learning from specialised domestic abuse projects delivered in West Mercia is shared with partner agencies and that any PCC commissioned services have adequate plans to take into account the feedback from the project to develop service provision.
- I will use the evaluation of the 2015 hospital based Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) pilot and the performance and outcome reporting from the new 2019 service to develop an evidence based business case to support future cross-sector buy-in for commissioning.
- I will ensure that commissioned services have an adequate plan for engaging male victims and survivors and diverse groups and that oversight and scrutiny is provided through contract/review meetings.
- I will also consider specific funding envelopes designed to support marginalised groups, recognising that there may be a need to develop specialist capacity locally to deliver this provision.

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- I will continue to actively engage with local authorities concerning domestic abuse service provision and if necessary, use powers to influence funding decisions.
 - I will ensure that CSPs allocate a proportionate amount of their PCC funding for domestic abuse provision in their area.
 - I will develop a primary, secondary and tertiary prevention commissioning model which will allow for longevity and security of service provision and centre around the national statement of expectations.
 - I will further develop my consultation work with victims and will work with police and partners to develop a victim led domestic abuse advisory group, linking into the Victims Board, and incorporate the learning from this group into commissioning activity.
 - I will ensure that there are clear and seamless referral pathways between commissioned domestic abuse and other specialist services and assess the requirement of specialist workers in each other's services, ensuring a holistic approach to service provision is provided.
 - I will work with partners to raise awareness of the national service which supports bereaved families of domestic homicide and ensure that victims' families are made aware of the offer through partners. I will also explore opportunities within VAL for provision of this service.

- I will ensure that specifications for domestic abuse services in West Mercia consider rurality and work with providers to ensure that delivery better reflects the need of these victims and survivors, ensuring consistent services are provided.
- I will ensure that I make contact and work with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner moving forward to ensure that the victim and survivors voice in West Mercia is heard.
- I will continue to ensure that a robust monitoring plan is implemented for West Mercia adherence to the Code of Practice for victims of crime and that particular scrutiny of the code is conducted for victims of domestic abuse to ensure that the enhanced services detailed in the code are being provided.

Partnership working

I will:

- encourage partners to work together to identify and address needs for the whole family where domestic abuse is present;
- challenge partners to keep the focus on domestic abuse and provide commitment of this through local strategies;
- educate partners that domestic abuse is not just an enforcement issue; a whole system approach must be developed;
- ensure that partners are fully aware of the rights of victims under the Victim Code of Practice;

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- collaborate with partners to enrich the intelligence picture and true existence of domestic abuse and the harm caused across West Mercia;
 - encourage partners to work together to increase intelligence and identify those who may be more vulnerable to domestic abuse.

Recommended actions

- I will work with the force and partners to use the learning from pilot initiatives such as Drive to explore opportunities for expansion into West Mercia wide service provision.
 - I will work with partners to explore opportunities for closer partnership working and joint commissioning opportunities to achieve shared outcomes through such national best practice multi-agency models.
 - I will continue to have oversight of national evaluations of models which look at working with the whole family, to inform future commissioning intentions.
 - I will use my convening powers through the Crime Reduction Board to ensure that the CSPs adopt a continuous improvement approach to implementation of the recommendations from any Domestic Homicide Reviews which occur.
 - I will use the domestic abuse needs assessment to identify the level of need for those with no recourse to public funds in West Mercia and consider future funding for this provision.
 - As domestic abuse is a priority for all CSPs, I will task the Partnership Analysts to create West Mercia domestic abuse profiles to truly understand the complete picture of all forms of domestic abuse in West Mercia.
 - I will ensure that all commissioned and grant funded services have an employee domestic abuse policy and that this is written into the terms and conditions of the grant/contract.
 - I will use my convening powers, with agencies who are represented at the strategic criminal justice, victims and crime reduction boards, to emphasise the importance of having a specific employee domestic abuse policy which includes a specific implementation plan around awareness raising and access to specialist services amongst all partners and staff. I will also ensure that the force policy includes victims as well as those who have been identified as perpetrators.
 - I will create a PCC hosted, West Mercia, Domestic Abuse commissioners partnership to explore collaborative working and joint commissioning opportunities.
 - I will continue to ensure that CSP funding is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of the sanctuary scheme.
 - I will continue the joint working approach to the development of multi-agency offender management processes, ensuring that processes are aligned and have a domestic abuse focus.
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- I will work with partners and stakeholders to explore innovative and creative ways in which digital technology can be used to tackle and disrupt domestic abuse behaviour alongside providing support to victims and survivors.

Pursuing perpetrators

I will:

- work with West Mercia Police and partners to adopt a co-ordinated approach to identifying and disrupting perpetrators;
- lobby government to develop a perpetrator strategy, supported by adequate funding;
- ensure that criminal justice agencies prosecute those who seek to control and harm others through domestic abuse;
- challenge and hold West Mercia Police to account to deliver an effective investigative response to the whole family which is the right response; the first time and every time;
- expose behaviour within the criminal justice system which does not focus on tackle, disrupt or support;
- ensure a tailored approach is provided when offenders are identified as domestic abuse victims;
- collaborate with partners to ensure that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system and drive improvements to the services that they receive;

- champion the rights of victims and scrutinise partner agencies adherence to the Victims Code through the multi-agency Victims Board.

Recommended actions

- I will use my holding to account process to expose and scrutinise the force approach to domestic abuse.
- I will work with the Local Criminal Justice Boards and Crime Reduction Boards to ensure that the findings and recommendations from the review of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) in West Mercia are implemented, as well as the 12 key components as set out by the National SDVC steering group.
- I will work with partners to explore feasibility of setting up SDVCs in other areas of West Mercia.
- I will consider domestic abuse provision in the context of female offenders and explore diversionary pathway links for female offenders who have also been victims, ensuring equal and consistent access to services.
- I will ensure through the Criminal Justice Board, that there is a designated local response to female offenders who have been affected by domestic abuse, taking into account recommendations from the strategy.

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- I will, through VAL, ensure that the victim care co-ordinators are working closely with the police to ensure that victims are being offered and provided with their support options through the criminal justice process and that regular dip-sampling of cases is conducted by VAL to check progress.
 - I will use my holding to account process to scrutinise the force approach to domestic abuse, ensuring that it is robust, tailored to need, heavily victim/survivor focused and has a strong emphasis on early identification and intervention and partnership working.
 - I will hold the force to account to explore the viability and suitability of using a range of criminal justice options in West Mercia to inform a tailored approach to domestic abuse perpetrators
 - I will invite a representative from the family courts into the Victims Board to improve partnership working and support for victims.
 - I will use my convening powers through the Criminal Justice Board to challenge criminal justice partners to have a robust local response to domestic abuse perpetrators and provision of safeguarding arrangements for victims/survivors and children.
 - I will continue to have oversight of the implementation of the SARA v3 model and if successful, work with criminal justice partners to share best practice and explore roll-out across West Mercia.



... survivors stressed the need to be believed and taken seriously, particularly emphasised by the male survivors ...



4. Policy context

The Home Office defines Domestic Abuse as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or 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. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological;
- physical;
- sexual;
- financial;
- emotional.

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

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called **honour** based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group^[5].

This definition was amended in 2012 to include those aged 16 and 17 years.

Most recent research by SafeLivesⁱ suggests that “in real terms, if you feel afraid of someone in your life who is supposed to care about you, it may be that you are experiencing domestic abuse. It does not have to be a spouse, it does not have to be physical and it can happen in any relationship. It can happen to anyone of any background, and it can include a range of behaviour”^[6].

ⁱ SafeLives are a UK-wide charity, dedicated to ending domestic abuse for good. They combine insight from services, survivors and statistics to support people to become safe, well and rebuild their lives.

5. Scale and impact of domestic abuse

We know that Domestic Abuse is hugely under-reported. The majority of cases do not come to the attention of the police and for those that do, do not always result in a conviction for the perpetrator of the abuse^[7].

This makes it a challenge to truly understand and tackle this violent and abusive behaviour.

The estimated cost for a single victim of domestic abuse is £34,015. While this represents an average, there are a range of different types of violent and sexual offences that victims of domestic abuse can experience. Most extreme is the cost of domestic homicide, which has an estimated unit cost of £2.2 million arising from the cost of harms, health services and lost output^[8].

Domestic abuse is seen as a 'widespread public health issue' by inspectorates such as HMICFRSⁱⁱ, Ofstedⁱⁱⁱ, HMIP^{iv}, and CQC^v. It is felt that the pattern of practice has served its time. Domestic abuse may be endemic, but it is not inevitable and it is possible for prevalence to decline^[9].

National

In order to fully understand the demand upon the Police that relates to domestic abuse, it is important to consider domestic abuse "crimes" as well as domestic abuse 'incidents'^{vi}.

➤ In the year ending March 2018, an estimated 2.0 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales. This is broken down into 1.3 million women (65%) and 695,000 men (35%)^[10].

➤ For the same year, police recorded 599,549 domestic abuse-related crimes and 598,545 domestic abuse-related incidents. The % of crimes vs incidents is a 50/50 split. When comparing these figures to the year ending March 2017, the % of domestic abuse related crimes was 43%, showing a 7% increase^[11].

The increase in crimes being reported can be attributed to better recording practices as well as an increase in the overall volume of offences coming to the attention of Police and increased confidence in victims and survivors to come forward and report. It is important in the context of these figures, to understand that there has been little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the year ending March 2018, compared with the year ending March 2017^[12].

In fact, when comparing data from the year ending March 2012 to March 2018, there has actually been a small decline in the prevalence (from 7% to 6.1%) indicating a gradual, longer-term downward trend^{[13] vii}.

Nationally, the HMICFRS 2019 report **The police response to domestic abuse**, recognises that demand upon Police forces for domestic abuse has increased dramatically since their first report back in 2013. Some reasons for the increase in demand are positive and are seen by professionals working in the domestic abuse as encouraging. However, the report also comments that "the reality is that some forces still can't yet fully explain why demand has increased so much, and this is an area in which they need to improve. To plan for the future and protect victims, forces need to understand this complex picture better"^[14]

ii Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

iii The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

iv Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

v Care Quality Commission

vi A crime is where a crime (as defined by home office counting rules) has taken place, a crimed incident is where an incident has been reported to the Police but has not been defined as a crime.

vii Individuals staying in refuges, halls of residence and custodial settings are not covered by the survey

Research conducted by SafeLives^[15] has identified that the following characteristics of victims and survivors mean that they are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse:

- **Gender** - women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe abuse;
- **Low Income** - women in households with an income of less than £10,000 were 3.5 times more at risk than those in households with an income of over £20,000;
- **Age** - younger people are more likely to be subject to interpersonal violence. The majority of high risk victims are in their 20s or 30s. Those under 25 are more likely to suffer interpersonal violence;
- **Pregnancy** - nearly one in three women who suffer from domestic abuse during their lifetime report that the first incident happened when they were pregnant;
- **Separation** - domestic violence is higher amongst those who have separated, followed by those who are divorced or single;
- **Previous criminality of the perpetrator** - domestic abuse is more likely where the perpetrator has a previous conviction (whether or not it is related to domestic abuse);
- **Drug and alcohol abuse** - victims of abuse have a higher rate of drug and/or alcohol misuse (whether it starts before or after the abuse): at least 20% of high-risk victims of abuse report using drugs and/or alcohol;

- **Mental health issues** - 40% of high-risk victims of abuse report mental health difficulties.

West Mercia

For the period April 2018 - March 2019, West Mercia Police recorded 26,105 domestic abuse crimes and incidents. Of these, 15,409 were identified as crimes and a further 10,696 were incidents where a crime was not committed^{viii}.

A summary of how this compares to previous years can be found on page 17.

The percentage of domestic abuse crimes being recorded is increasing year on year. In comparison to the national increases for the 2016/17 to 2017/18 year, West Mercia had an increase of 17% compared to the national average of 7% for the same year. The data also shows a higher than national average recording of DA crimes which is seen as positive and can be attributed to the work going on locally around awareness of domestic abuse as well as increased confidence to report to police.

In relation to the 2018/19 year, some other key points are listed below:

- 68% of victims were female, compared to 25% for males - the % of males has increased by 2% compared to the previous two years;
- 23% of suspects were female and 77% were male - the % of male suspects has slightly dropped compared to previous years.

viii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

	2016/17	2017/18	16/17 to 17/18 comparison	2018/19	17/18 to 18/19 comparison
Crimes	10,790	12,611	> of 17%	15,409	> of 22%
Crimed Incidents	10,491	10,530	> of 0.3%	10,696	> of 1.5%
Totals	21,281	23,141		26,105	
Split of crimes/ incidents	51%/49%	54%/46%		59%/41%	

In this context it is important to consider that these are only the domestic abuse incidents and crimes which are reported to the Police and will not be an accurate reflection of true prevalence.

Some consultation work^[16] with survivors highlighted that in West Mercia:

- 89% of participants had experienced multiple forms of abuse concurrently;
- the duration of abuse was between one and 32 years;
- 57.8% of the survivors were aged 30-49 years, older than the national average but is a reflection of the overall West Mercia population, which is older than the national average;
- few participants were aged 60+ which reflects a lack of disclosure and knowledge of domestic abuse in this older age group, a concern for West Mercia;
- 61.7% of participants had a disability or serious illness, of which 65.5% stated this was mental health related;
- 73% had experienced domestic abuse within the last five years;
- on average, older victims/survivors (50+) had stayed in abusive relationships longer than those who were younger;
- the duration of abusive relationships was between one and 32 years;
- the most prevalent type of abuse experienced was emotional abuse, followed by psychological and coercive control;
- 47.5% of participants were still experiencing abuse post-separation - an important risk factor for homicide;
- all participants talked about the impact on their ability to function in society and form/maintain relationships as well as a range of physical, emotional, mental health, financial and behavioural effects on them directly.

Criminal Justice

HMICFRS have previously shown concerns that the arrest rates for domestic abuse is falling nationally^[17].

In West Mercia, the arrest rate for DA offences in West Mercia for 18/19 was 26%^[18]. For the same year nationally, this figure was 38%^[19].

Nationally, for the year ending March 2018, there was a total of 89,091 prosecutions for domestic abuse-related offences, which accounted for around 17% of all prosecutions in England and Wales. This figure shows a volume decrease in the number of domestic abuse-related prosecutions compared with the previous year (93,590)^[20]. Of these prosecutions, 76% of were successful in securing a conviction - the highest level since the year ending March 2010 (72%)^[21].

For West Mercia, for the year ending March 2018, there were 1,753 prosecutions for domestic abuse offences, accounting for 14.92% of all prosecutions^{ix}. The conviction rate for West Mercia for the year ending March 2019 was 82.5%.

Repeat victims

Victims of domestic abuse are more likely to be repeat victims than victims of any other crime type. The 2019 report by HMICFRS, **The police response to domestic abuse**, stated that forces need to identify repeat victims as early as possible. Out of the 43 forces inspected as part of the report, 15 of them reported that they now use flags on their call-handling system to help call handlers identify repeat victims of domestic abuse. However, 28 forces still don't use repeated domestic abuse flags on their systems^[22].

		Number of DA repeat victims - WMP			
Financial year	Force	Repeat victim (2+ DA offences)	Single DA offence victim	Grand total	WMP DA repeat rate (victims)
2016/17	WMP	1,567	7,147	8,804	18.8%
2017/18	WMP	1,804	7,684	9,488	19.0%
2018/19	WMP	2,471	7,889	10,360	23.9%

For West Mercia, the % of repeat domestic abuse victims has risen by over 5% in the last three years. Whilst this could be attributed towards an increased confidence in reporting, it also shows that more needs to be done to tackle the root cause of the behaviour, the perpetrators. Work also needs to be done in relation to how domestic abuse victims are supported by the police and other agencies, particularly those who are repeat victims^x.

ix Based on data provided directly from the Crown Prosecution Service

x Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Domestic homicide

In some domestic abuse cases, victims are killed. These cases are identified as **domestic homicide**. A domestic homicide is the “death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom he or she was related, or with whom he or she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship; or, a member of the same household as himself or herself”^[23].

Between April 2014 and March 2017^{xi}, there were a total of 400 domestic homicides recorded by the police in England and Wales; this represents 25% of all homicides where the victim was aged 16 or over during this time period^[24]. In West Mercia, between April 2014 and March 2019, there have been 20 domestic homicides committed. 50% of these occurred in Worcestershire alone. Compared to all homicides in West Mercia for the same period, domestic related ones accounted for over 30% (33%), higher than the national average^{xii}.

Recent research conducted by a criminologist of domestic homicides in the UK^[25] suggested that killers followed an eight stage pattern.

1. A pre-relationship **history** of stalking or abuse by the perpetrator.
2. The romance **developing quickly** into a serious relationship.
3. The relationship becoming dominated by **coercive control**.
4. A **trigger** to threaten the perpetrator's control - for example, the relationship ends or the perpetrator gets into financial difficulty.

5. Escalation - an increase in the intensity or frequency of the partner's control tactics, such as by stalking or threatening suicide.
6. The perpetrator has a **change in thinking** - choosing to move on, either through revenge or by homicide.
7. **Planning** - the perpetrator might buy weapons or seek opportunities to get the victim alone.
8. **Homicide** - the perpetrator kills his or her partner, and possibly hurts others such as the victim's children.

Stalking and harassment

Stalking and harassment occurs not only in a domestic abuse setting - people can be stalked by strangers or acquaintances too.

Stalking is defined as “a specific type of harassment, often described as a pattern of unwanted, fixated or obsessive behaviour which is intrusive, and causes fear of violence or serious alarm and distress. For example, a person following, watching or spying on someone else, or forcing contact with them through social media, might be considered as stalking”.

Harassment offences involve a “course of conduct, or repeated actions, which could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person. This will often include repeated attempts to impose unwanted contact or communication on someone”^[26].

xi The 3 year comparison was used due to the fluctuating numbers across the different years.

xii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

There are differences between stalking and harassment and coercive and controlling behaviour and it's important for the police to consider these differences when determining if a crime has been committed.

Victims of harassment and stalking crimes are often vulnerable and have frequently suffered the actions of perpetrators over a long period of time. Many victims who are survivors of domestic abuse leave coercive and controlling relationships only to become the victims of an extension of this behaviour by way of harassment and stalking^[27].

- Nationally, the police recorded 106,905 domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2018, accounting for just under one-fifth (18%) of all domestic abuse-related crimes. Over half of these crimes were harassment (54%, 57,840) and 40% were malicious communications^[28].

There has been no significant change in the level of stalking by a partner or ex-partner nationally, or stalking by a family member in the year ending March 2018 compared with the year ending March 2005^[29].

- For West Mercia, in the year ending March 2018, domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences accounted for 2,694 (21%) of all domestic abuse crimes. Compared to the national levels, this was a 3% increase in volume. The breakdown of these crimes between stalking and harassment was 55% and for malicious communications was 45%. For the year ending March 2019, this figure rose to 25%^{xiii}.

Coercive control

In 2015, the Serious Crime Act was updated to create a new crime of “controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationship”. Controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident, it is **a purposeful pattern of behaviour** which takes place over time in order for one individual **to exert power, control or coercion over another**^[30].

This type of behaviour has been recognised in the professional field for a number of years as a non-physical act of domestic abuse and the creation of the offence in 2015 was welcomed by many.

Examples of controlling and coercive behaviour might include; isolation, deprivation of basic needs, repeatedly putting someone down telling them they are worthless, threats to hurt or kill, controlling aspects of everyday life such as who they can see, if they have access to money, whether they can go out^[31].

- For the year ending March 2018, 9,053 offences of coercive control were recorded by police in England and Wales which was an increase on the previous year. This represented 1.5% of all domestic abuse related crimes^[32].
- For the same timescale, West Mercia recorded 241 offences of coercive control, equating to 2% of all DA crimes. For 2018/19, the number of offences increased to 287 but the % remained the same at 2%^{xiv}. This suggests that although higher than the national average, as the national average is recognised a low, improvements need to be made in terms of correctly identifying and recording this.

xiii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

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‘Honour’ based violence (HBV)

The Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service define HBV as “a crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community”. There is no statutory definition of HBV^[33].

Honour based violence is in evidence across countries, cultures and religions. Circumstances which may lead to the abuse are wide ranging and not culturally specific^[34].

Research shows that HBV affects people of all ages, but often begins early, in the family home. This can lead to a deeply embedded form of coercive control, built on expectations about behaviour that are made clear at a young age. Often the control is established without obvious violence against the victim, for instance through family members threatening to kill themselves because of the victim’s behaviour^[35].

Perpetrators of HBV often extend beyond the circle of partners and family members who would be considered perpetrators of domestic abuse. Findings from SafeLives’ Insights research shows that:

- Over half (54%) of domestic abuse victims at risk of HBV were abused by multiple people, compared to only 7% of those not identified as at risk of HBV. However, this wider network of abusers is often centred around partners or family members, and as such most victims of HBV are also victims of domestic abuse^[36].

When HBV victims accessed support from domestic abuse services, they had experienced the full range of abuse seen by other domestic abuse victims, and were on average considered to be at higher risk of serious harm or murder compared to those not identified as at risk of HBV^[37].

Beyond the abuse itself, there are circumstances commonly found in cases of HBV that can lead to additional risks. Many victims of HBV are recent migrants to the UK, who may need an interpreter, or who are reliant on the perpetrator for a visa.

- A quarter (23%) of HBV victims accessing services had no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and a quarter (26%) required an interpreter^[38]. Those who have NRPF are not entitled to support from Housing Services or access to Housing Benefits, which causes barriers in accessing safe accommodation and support services^[39].
- The average length of abuse before seeking support was five years for those at risk of HBV. This is far longer than the three year average for those not identified as at risk of HBV. In addition, it found that 57% of the victims in the research had visited their GP in the last 12 months and 19% had attended A&E as a direct result of the abuse. Despite this, only 6% of these were then referred onto specialist domestic abuse services^[40].
- In 2017/18, nationally, 145 HBV offences were recorded by Police. This was a 27% reduction from the 200 in 2016/17^[41].

-
- For 2017/18, West Mercia recorded 7 HBV offences which was a 14% increase than 2016/17. This figure further increased to 15 reported crimes for 2018/19^{xv}.

Although the increase in recording is positive, we still have work to do with partner agencies in ensuring that these victims and survivors are identified earlier and access support available to them.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

The Home Office defines FGM as ‘all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons’^[42].

FGM is practised across the world and is found in the UK amongst members of migrant communities. UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean. Non-African communities that practise FGM include Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani^[43].

- An estimated 137,000 women and girls with FGM, born in countries where FGM is practised, were permanently resident in England and Wales in 2011, a prevalence rate of 4.8 per 1,000 population.
- London had the highest prevalence by location^[44].

FGM is a complex issue as it is often associated with culture leading communities to believe that it is normal. However, the enactment of FGM is illegal.

- In West Mercia, between April 2016 and March 2019, there was one offence of FGM recorded^{xvi}.

Although national rates of FGM offences are low, research tells us there are likely to be affected women and girls living in every local authority^[45]. As West Mercia is made up of three upper tier local authorities, one unitary authority and six district authorities, it can be suggested that FGM is under-reported in West Mercia.

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is where “one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. Pressure could be physical, emotional or psychological”^[46].

In 2014, forced marriage became illegal in England and Wales. The Home Office and Foreign Commonwealth Office have set up a Forced Marriage Unit which leads on the government’s policy, outreach and casework. It also operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage as well as to professionals dealing with cases. They also undertake an extensive training and awareness programme targeting both professionals and potential victims^[47].

xv Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

xvi Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Due to the links to culture, victims of HBV and forced marriage often remain hidden and are reluctant to come forward and access support services. When they do come forward and access support services and the Police, there are additional complexities around pursuing prosecutions due to the cultural links to the family. Victims are often in fear of being socially isolated and 'shaming the family'^[48].

National data relating to numbers of forced marriage crimes committed is limited. The national helpline run by the FMU provided advice or support to 1,764 cases, an increase of 47% compared to the previous year. The majority of these cases (33%) were aged under 18^[49].

- ▶ Although the FMU is worldwide, 119 of these cases (7%) were from the UK which is a decrease compared to previous years. Of these 7%, the majority of cases were from the London area (18%), however, 11.6% were from the West Midlands^[50].
- ▶ In West Mercia, between April 2016 and March 2019, there have been 13 forced marriage offences recorded^{xvii}.

“ ... help was only sought when the situation was at crisis/emergency point, at the point at which they realised they were experiencing domestic abuse, the latter being particularly true for those not being physically abused ... ”

Children

For a child, witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, according to the NPSCO^[51].

It is difficult to truly understand the numbers or experiences of children who have been affected by domestic abuse for many reasons; we know that domestic abuse in adults is significantly under-reported, that the recording of children affected by domestic abuse and their experiences can only be conducted if they come to the attention of key agencies such as health, children's social care or police; and the Office for National Statistics only collect data around adults affected.

However, SafeLives research tells us that “two in five children (41%) in families where there is domestic abuse have been living with that abuse since they were born”. Combined with information on the percentage of all children who have been exposed to domestic abuse in their homes, they estimate that at least one child in every reception school class has been living with abuse for their whole life^[52].

Where there is domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in the home, research indicates a strong link between this type of behaviour and all types of child abuse and neglect. Prolonged or regular exposure to DVA can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional well-being, despite the best efforts of the victim's parent to protect the child^[53].

xvii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Research (WHO, 2010) suggests that children who are exposed to violence in childhood are between three and four times more likely to perpetrate violence in adulthood. The same research found that women who witnessed DVA in their childhood may be up to three times more at risk of DVA.

The inference is that exposure to violence in childhood may increase acceptance of violence, either as a perpetrator or victim in adulthood^[54].

Our consultation work with survivors^[55] told us that in West Mercia, 87% of those who participated had children and impacts of the abuse on their children included fear, anxiety, attachment issues, low confidence/self-esteem, self-harm, isolation, sadness, anger, confusion, mental illness (including being sectioned) and nightmares.

Data in West Mercia Police is scarce for numbers of children who are linked to domestic abuse crimes and crimed incidents. However, we know from our commissioned services (working with high risk domestic abuse cases), that for 2017/18, 1,434 children were linked to a parent in service. There are approximately 199,596 school aged^{xviii} children in West Mercia according to national statistics^[56].

In 2018, West Mercia Police conducted analysis which looked at identifying the numbers of children who were exposed to domestic abuse. For the 2017/18 year, for Worcestershire only, the number of children affected was 6,247. For the period April 2018 to end of October 2018, this figure was 4,661^[57].

To truly tackle and prevent this horrific crime, it is important to recognise and understand that domestic abuse has an impact on the whole family.

Adolescent to parent violence and abuse

Adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA) may be referred to as 'adolescent to parent violence (APV)', 'adolescent violence in the home (AVITH)', 'parent abuse', 'child to parent abuse', 'child to parent violence (CPV)', or 'battered parent syndrome'. There is currently no legal definition of APVA^[58]. APVA is like other forms of abuse between people in close relationships, in that there are differing levels of harm and a complex map of individual and social factors in play, and that drive this behaviour^[59].

APVA is widely recognised by practitioners who work with families across a range of support services. However, APVA is not specifically flagged on police or health and social care databases and so it is difficult to count the number of reported cases on a national level.

Evidence of the extent of the problem is therefore piecemeal and developing incrementally. It is important to recognise that incidents of APVA reported to the police are likely to represent only a small percentage of actual incidents and actual levels are likely to be much higher^[60].

However, SafeLives conducted some research^{xix} which showed that nearly a quarter (23%) of 13 to 17 year olds accessing specialist young people's domestic abuse services were demonstrating harmful behaviour and that 61% of these people were demonstrating harmful behaviour towards their mother^[61].

xviii For the purposes of this data, school aged children are aged between 4-17 years

xix SafeLives data cannot be classified as "official statistics"

Many parents worry that their victimisation will not be taken seriously or, if they are taken seriously, that they will be held to account and that their child may be taken away from them and/or criminalised. In addition to this, adolescents may also choose not to disclose due to guilt or fear of the social care and justice system. Young people may not understand the impact of their actions and be concerned about the consequences so they may not seek help, allowing the situation to escalate to crisis^[62].

These young people will often lack an understanding of healthy relationships, or need help to control behaviour that they know is wrong. Changing the attitude and response of these young people is as important as holding them accountable for their behaviour^[63].

Older people

On average, older victims experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61 and nearly half have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely under-represented among domestic abuse services^[64]. SafeLives research^[65] also found that older people (over 60) experienced:

- systematic invisibility;
- long term abuse and dependency issues;
- general attitudes about domestic abuse making it hard to identify;
- increased risk of adult family abuse;
- services are not effectively targeted at older victims, and do not always meet their needs;

- a need for more coordination between services.

In addition to this, HMICFRS conducted a joint inspection^[66] into crimes affecting older people, particularly looking at the police and Crown Prosecution Service response and identified that:

- crime against older people isn't well understood, despite the vulnerability of older people and the importance that society attaches to looking after people in their old age;
- there has been little police analysis of the problem of crimes against older people, including the links to disability, hate crime and domestic abuse;
- over a quarter of domestic homicides in the UK involve a victim aged 60 or over, even though this age group accounts for 18% of the population;
- domestic abuse referrals by the police to the CPS have also decreased over previous years, suggesting more work needs to take place to understand why;
- the use of flags is important but found that forces didn't always flag cases which involved financial abuse in domestic circumstances.

HMICFRS are developing a strategy to outline what steps Police need to take to address some of the current challenges and understand the links with older people and domestic abuse better, to ensure that the response to vulnerable older victims of crime is improved^[67].

Homelessness

Domestic abuse accounts for at least 1 in 10 people who require local authority support for homelessness. These figures are likely to be much higher, especially for women, who are both disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and often **hidden** from official homelessness statistics. In addition, women with extensive experience of physical and sexual violence are far more likely to experience disadvantage in many other areas of their lives; homelessness is one area of disadvantage, but others include disability and ill health, substance dependence, poverty, debt and discrimination. All of these can be a further barrier to gaining secure accommodation and ending the cycle^[68].

Economic abuse

Economic abuse is a form of domestic abuse. It goes beyond financial abuse and can involve behaviours that control a person's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources. This may include money, food, transport and housing - for example, restricting the use of a car or ruining credit ratings. The government is seeking to include economic abuse in the new statutory definition of domestic abuse^[69].

“ ... most survivors indicated that it would be effective to work with young people in schools to tackle attitudes early and that more resources were needed to safeguard children and young people ... ”

6. Prioritisation of domestic abuse

Tackling domestic abuse and the harm that it causes has been identified as a priority both nationally and locally.



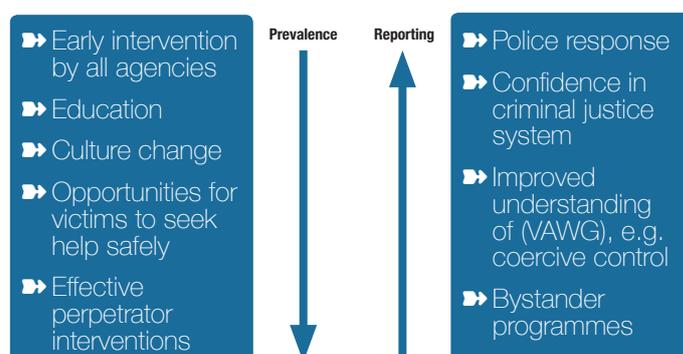
National

At national level there is a current focus and work around domestic abuse. In January 2019, the government conducted a consultation on a draft Domestic Abuse Bill, something which emphasises the commitment nationally to tackling this issue^[70]. The bill has yet to become legislation. Government has also recently developed a Victims' Strategy (2018) which outlines its vision for victims of crime, to ensure that they receive the support they need throughout the criminal justice system^[71].

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' Strategy (2016-20)

The government's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy (2016-20) identifies four key priority areas in terms of tackling VAWG. These areas are; preventing violence and abuse, provision of services, partnership working and pursuing perpetrators^[72].

The outcomes that government are seeking to achieve in this strategy can be seen below:



In 2019, the government refreshed its Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2016-2020)^[73].

Local

West Mercia Police have developed a 4 Ps plan, using the national 4 Ps framework (Pursue, Prepare, Protect and Prevent) as a basis for their strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse. The plan focuses on achieving the following outcomes:

- **PURSUE** - prosecute and disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse;
- **PREVENT** - prevent people from being victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse;
- **PROTECT** - strengthen safeguards against domestic abuse;
- **PREPARE** - reduce the impact of domestic abuse. The table on the next page illustrates the comparisons between the national VAWG strategy, the PCC strategy and West Mercia's strategic approach to domestic abuse.

The tables below illustrate the comparisons between the national VAWG strategy, the PCC strategy and West Mercia's strategic approach to domestic abuse.

<h3>HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)</h3>	<h3>Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)</h3>	<h3>West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan</h3> <p>Improved outcomes for victims Effective management of risk Improve victim satisfaction Increase public confidence</p>
<p>Preventing violence and abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued increases in the overall prevalence of domestic and sexual violence as measured by the CSEW and reduction in the prevalence of FGM in line with our aim to end FGM within a generation. More victims are helped to long term independence and freedom from violence and abuse by breaking the generational cycle, strengthening the focus on prevention and early intervention and addressing underlying issues driving perpetrators More victims and offenders are identified at the earliest possible opportunity, with effective interventions in place to prevent violence and abuse from escalating to a crisis point, with a reduction in high-rates of re-victimisation Increased awareness across all sections of society that VAWG is unacceptable in all circumstances with individuals, communities and frontline agencies empowered to confidently challenge negative attitudes to VAWG Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of respect and consent in relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong - including abuse taking place online Social norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices tolerating VAWG amongst communities in a range of developing countries continue to shift in recognition of its unacceptability Stronger global evidence base and high quality data on primary prevention is available which helps to inform policies and programmes at home and overseas. 	<p>Building a more secure West Mercia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use early intervention to prevent victimisation. Work with partner agencies to reduce harm and prevent victimisation. Proactively finding the causes of crime so threats are identified and targeted before they escalate. Working effectively with partners and local communities to prevent, resolve and reduce crime. Delivery a reduction in harm and increased feeling of safety as a result of few repeat victims and offenders. <p>Reassuring West Mercia's communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners to improve intervention. 	<p>PREVENT</p> <p>Prevent people from being victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness and appropriate use of DVDS; particularly 'right to know'. Increase the use of proactive DVPNs and robust enforcement of prohibitions. Identification and robust management of Domestic Abuse Serial Perpetrators. Raise awareness of the reality and consequences of domestic abuse. <p>PREPARE</p> <p>Reduce the impact of domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of children affected by DA and utilisation of Op Encompass.

HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)

Provision of services

- Local partners assess the needs of victims and survivors and their families, have local strategies to ensure they can access the right support at the right time.
- No victim is turned away from accessing critical support services delivered by refuges, rape support centres and FGM and forced marriage units.
- Services are transformed to provide support at an earlier stage so that fewer victims will reach crisis point and need refuge, or other secure accommodation.
- Better access to integrated pathways of support to meet the needs of victims experiencing multiple disadvantages.
- A robust global evidence base in place to support interventions that work and to inform commission decisions domestically and abroad.
- More survivors of violence are supported through overseas programmes, including in conflict and humanitarian settings, through charitable trusts, for example, the Bit Lottery Fund.

Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)

Putting victims and survivors first

- Work hard to put victims and survivors first.
- Develop a new Victims Charter, clarifying what services victims can expect, and what services must be delivered.
- Complete a victim needs assessment.
- Make sure victims and survivors get effective services, enabling them to cope and recover and reduce their chances of re-victimisation.
- Work with government to further enhance the services for victims, survivors and witnesses locally.
- Deliver an inclusive approach to commissioned services where all victims, survivors and witnesses are kept informed and receive tailored support.
- Champion enhanced support for the most vulnerable.

Building a more secure West Mercia

- Make sure public funding is allocated responsibly, is outcome focused and based on proven need.

West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan

Improved outcomes for victims
Effective management of risk
Improve victim satisfaction
Increase public confidence

PROTECT

Strengthen safeguards against domestic abuse

- Encourage and support continuous improvement and learning.
- Ensure individuals and teams take ownership of service delivery to victims.
- Seek opportunities for community engagement to raise awareness of domestic abuse.
- Be forward thinking in terms of the national direction for policy, process, CPD and innovation.
- Effective signposting and referral to partner agencies and support services.

HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)

Partnership working

- Multi-agency working in local areas is transformed with improved links to other areas of safeguarding, improved risk mitigation and needs-led interventions for victims, children and perpetrators, supported by the framework set out in the NSE.
- Areas routinely have a VAWG partnership, rigorous needs assessment and local strategy with VAWG considered in line with drug and alcohol services, homelessness services and children's services to ensure wrap-around support for victims and their families.
- More children are safeguarded and more families supported through the collection and appropriate multi-agency sharing of information (for example on FGM).
- Consideration of violence and abuse is mainstreamed across businesses with more employers introducing policies to support staff who may be victims of domestic abuse or stalking.
- There is a greater focus on changing the behaviour of perpetrators through disruption, based on strong evidence of what works, and centred on victim safety.
- The global community will collaborate to build political will and institutional capacity to prevent VAWG and implement Global Goal 5 on gender equality, including the specific targets on violence against women and girls.

Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)

Building a more secure West Mercia

- Ensure partners work together to provide efficient and effective support to victims.
- Develop strong partnerships which deliver shared outcomes, particularly with community safety partnerships, local authorities, fire and rescue services, health and wellbeing boards, safeguarding children's and adult's boards.

Putting victims and survivors first

- Bring together and help lead a new Victims Board to ensure better results and consistency.
- Deliver a seamless pathway of commissioned activity, dovetailing where possible into existing provision from partner agencies increasing victim confidence.

Reforming West Mercia

- Join up services and commissioning with partners where there are operational and financial benefits.
- Deliver a network of partner, public and third sector agencies working alongside the police to deliver a safer West Mercia.

West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan

Improved outcomes for victims
Effective management of risk
Improve victim satisfaction
Increase public confidence

PREPARE

Reduce the impact of domestic abuse

- Improve identification of risk factors associated with domestic abuse and quality of DASH.
- Appropriate use of RMPs to identify and mitigate ongoing risks.
- Drive improvements in performance by sharing best practice, addressing learning and appropriate use of those with relevant experience and skills.
- Understand early intervention strategies and provision of support services.

PREVENT

Prevent people from being victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse

- Encourage the effective use of information sharing and risk management between partners.

HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)

Pursuing perpetrators

- Increased victim confidence in, and access to, the criminal justice system for all victims of VAWG, demonstrated by increased reporting of police recorded crime and continued increases in prosecutions.
- Improved victim satisfaction within the criminal justice system, including getting the first response right first time using Victim Satisfaction Surveys to assess impact of our work.
- An embedded robust approach to tackling perpetrators through greater scrutiny of their motives and behaviour with a reduction in re-offending.
- Improved use of new technology and rehabilitation directed with a measurable reduction in re-offending for these crimes - this is linked to the prevention work to break the abuse cycle (chapter 1).
- Greater transparency and accountability of the criminal justice system through improved data provision.

Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)

Putting victims and survivors first

- Achieving the right outcome for the victim and supporting more cases through the criminal justice system.
- Ensure victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system.
- Act on recurring concerns about victims in the criminal justice system.

Building a more secure West Mercia

- Deliver an increase in reporting of offences to the police from both victims and witnesses.

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

- Increased confidence in local policing.

West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan

Improved outcomes for victims
Effective management of risk
Improve victim satisfaction
Increase public confidence

PURSUE

Prosecute and disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse

- Strict adherence to deployment policy and timely response to victims.
- Evidence led investigators, including robust use of BWV and powers of arrest.
- Ongoing effective and robust management of risk using full range of policing and partner agency powers.
- Regular scrutiny to inform best practice and individual/organisational learning.
- Use and apply a multi-agency approach to disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (2019)

The government commitment to tackling domestic abuse is outlined in the draft Domestic Abuse Bill, which sets out their legislative proposals as well as a practical course of action^[74]. The objectives of the draft bill are to:

- **Promote awareness** - to put domestic abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, and raise public and professional awareness;
- **Protect and support** - to enhance the safety of victims and the support that they receive;
- **Transform the justice process** - to prioritise victim safety in the criminal and family courts, and review the perpetrator journey from identification to rehabilitation;
- **Improve performance** - to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all areas, agencies and sectors.

SafeLives - 'The Whole Picture'

SafeLives has developed a national strategy entitled **The Whole Picture** which aims to end domestic abuse for good^[75]. The outcomes of this strategy are:

- act before someone is harmed;
- identify and stop harmful behaviours;
- increase safety of those at risk;
- support people to live the lives they want after harm occurs.

These outcomes are over-arched by having a focus on the:

- whole person;
- whole family;
- whole community;
- whole society.

NHS England - 'Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services' (2018 - 2023)

Sexual abuse can and does occur within domestic abuse relationships. Many of those victims within domestic abuse services have also been a victim of sexual assault or abuse and vice versa. In April 2018 NHS England published their five year Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services, which seeks to radically improve access to services for victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse and support them to recover, heal and rebuild their lives^[76]. The strategy focuses on the following core priorities:

- strengthening the approach to prevention;
- driving collaboration and reducing fragmentation;
- ensuring an appropriately trained workforce;
- introducing consistent quality standards;
- involving victims and survivors in the development and improvement of services;
- promoting safeguarding and the safety, protection and welfare of victims and survivors.

The PCC is currently undertaking a programme of work designed to implement the recommendations from the NHS strategy in West Mercia. It is important that when considering any actions from this domestic abuse strategy, that they are aligned to this programme of work.

These national and local strategies all echo that domestic abuse must be considered as everyone's business, that partner agencies need to work together to tackle domestic abuse, and that the impact of domestic abuse upon the whole family needs to be considered.

It is also important that the actions which are developed alongside this strategy are considered in line with other strategies which have been developed by the PCC, including the Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) strategy and the Rural Crime strategy.



... more training is required around the manipulative behaviours of perpetrators and the challenging of attitudes in the local community ...



7. Preventing violence and abuse

Prevention and early intervention remains the foundation of the government's approach to tackling VAWG. Once patterns of violence are entrenched, the harder it is to break the cycle of abuse, to support victims and to deter perpetrators^[77].

This is why prevention and early intervention is key to this Domestic Abuse strategy. The approach adopted by government is in three ways: primary prevention, which is to prevent harm from happening in the first place, secondary prevention, to intervene earlier with individuals at risk and to prevent escalation of harm; and tertiary prevention, to prevent re-offending and re-victimisation^[78].

Much has been commented on nationally about the impact that domestic abuse has on a child and how it can shape their future behaviour and beliefs. The Department for Education have completed some research work around this and found that domestic abuse was the most common factor in situations where children are at risk of serious harm in this country^[79].

Significant work has also been undertaken by Public Health Wales around the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs^{xx}) on children.

16% of adults had been exposed to domestic violence (one ACE) as a child from the Welsh study, and 14% of adults surveyed had experienced more than 4 ACEs as a child. The study indicated that adults with 4+ ACEs were identified as 14 times more likely to have been a victim of violence over the last 12 months and 15 times more likely to have committed violence against another person within the last 12 months compared to those who hadn't experienced any ACEs at all^[80].

It is important to consider the wider impact of ACES and the links to child criminal exploitation/serious and organised crime/county lines activity^{xxi}. Research tells us that the key characteristics of county lines involves the exploitation of a vulnerability - usually drug dependency, attachment/emotional issues, poverty or mental health. It also tells us that exposure to or experience of violence and domestic abuse are factors which could increase a child's vulnerability to exploitation^[81].

The recognition and impact of ACEs, and factors which influence how children can be criminally exploited, are being considered across the PCCs work. The PCC is in the process of developing a West Mercia Diversionary Network (WMDN), which will seek to develop a holistic partnership approach to working with children and young people who have experienced trauma in their lives. The WMDN will seek to reduce vulnerabilities, improve health outcomes and divert CYP away from the criminal justice system. **The PCC will ensure that any PCC commissioned specialist domestic abuse services and the WMDN services are aligned to ensure a holistic package of support is offered to children and young people.**

Barnardo's have recently developed a Domestic Violence Risk Assessment for Children (DVRAC), designed to help practitioners; (where there is male perpetrated domestic abuse) identify risks to children from domestic violence; decide whether a case needs safeguarding support or family support; and identify appropriate interventions for the children, the non-abusing parents and the abusive parent^[82].

xx ACEs are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child (e.g. sexual or physical abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence)

xxi County lines is a term used for the practice of trafficking drugs into rural areas

In West Mercia, the PCC has provided match funding to the Shropshire Community Safety Partnership to implement the DVRAC and provide training for practitioners to use this. **The PCC will continue to have oversight of this implementation and evaluation through the CSP and consider sharing across West Mercia, if the evidence base shows effectiveness, for local implementation.**

It's clear that working with partner agencies such as Education and schools is key to developing a long term, sustainable and effective plan to try and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on adults as well as children. Schools have the capability to see a child's behaviour day in day out and notice any changes.

In early 2019, the government has made Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education in schools^{xxii} mandatory and produced draft statutory guidance for delivery of this work. Whilst schools are encouraged to adopt the guidance from September 2019, it will become mandatory from September 2020⁷⁹.

West Mercia have adopted the roll-out of Operation Encompass, a national programme which enables Police to work with Education and schools to share details of a domestic abuse incident which has occurred in the home. By notifying the school by 9am the following day, enables them to provide a swift responding to ensuring that the appropriate support is provided^[84]. **The PCC will work with the Early Help Partnerships and other partners across West Mercia to explore wider identification of children who are affected by domestic abuse, linking in with the Operation Encompass programme.**

The PCC will hold the Force to account to ensure that they have a robust data capturing system which allows clear identification of numbers of children in households where domestic abuse is present through the Operation Encompass programme.

The PCC commissions the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service, a service which addresses the safety of victims who are at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety and the safety of their children. The IDVAs work closely with victims and multi-agency partners to reduce the risk of harm and provide advice and support, as well as a voice for the victim. The IDVA service works with victims aged 16 or over^[85].

The PCC also commissions a Children and Young People's service to work with children and young people whose parents are within the IDVA service. The service is commissioned to provide a variety of support, tailored to individual need. We know that from the data around how many children have parents in the IDVA service, the current provision is not enough.

As well as being impacted by witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse in the home, we know that younger people are more likely to directly experience inter-personal violence in their own relationships^[86]. Research conducted by SafeLives showed that the likelihood of young people^{xxiii} experiencing high severity abuse is no different to adults. It also concluded that for victims younger than 16, who must rely on limited specialist services for young people, the visibility of victims is likely to be even lower.

xxii Unless otherwise specified, 'school' means all schools, whether maintained, non-maintained or independent schools, including academies and free schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.

xxiii SafeLives research covered ages from 13-17 years

Young people who experience domestic abuse do so at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives and the evidence suggests that young people need a different response to adults. The abuse that young people experience may also look different to the abuse that adults experience. Young people commonly experience abuse through new technologies and social media, which can be used as a monitoring or harassment tool by the perpetrator^[87].

One of the approaches piloted previously by SafeLives is the development of a Young Persons Violence Adviser (YPVA). The YPVA model was developed following the 2012 change to include 16 and 17 year olds in the definition of domestic abuse. The Young People's Programme aims to make young people experiencing domestic abuse safer by offering training, support and data collection to a named Young People's Violence Advisor, in each local authority area. The aim is that each local MARAC and Safeguarding Children service will work together to embed an appropriate local practice response to teenage domestic violence and abuse^[88]. **The PCC will work with local authority and other partners to understand if there is a need for such a service in West Mercia.**

The national VAWG strategy, recognising that domestic abuse is a gender base crime, advocates that men can be a powerful force in challenging negative behaviours and are considered an integral part of approaches to prevention. It also suggests that engaging boys in challenging VAWG is key^[89]. White Ribbon Campaigns are one of the approaches supported which is supported by government to engage men to tackle the issue^[90].

The PCC provides funding to the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across West Mercia. As part of this funding, some of the funding is provided to some of the CSPs for a White Ribbon campaign. It is not clear exactly how far each of the CSPs go in terms of rolling out the White Ribbon model which includes creating volunteer ambassadors to engage with other men and boys to call out and challenge abusive behaviour and applying for accreditation. **The PCC will conduct further research into effective prevention programmes working with young men and boys to inform future commissioning.**

The national VAWG strategy has a clear approach for identifying victims and offenders at their earliest opportunity, to intervene effectively to prevent violence and abuse from escalating and tackle high rates of re-victimisation. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)^{xxiv} and the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH)^{xxv} are two tools which have been developed to support earlier identification and intervention^[91].

The DVDS scheme is fully active and promoted in West Mercia. In the 2018/19 year, 381 applications were made and of those, 168 had previous offending history disclosed. In the HMICFRS PEEL^{xxvi} inspection report 2018/19, it was suggested that West Mercia needs to continue its efforts to improve the workforce's understanding of the importance of thoroughly risk-assessing reports of domestic abuse. The lack of a force-wide analysis of DASH quality and completion rates was also noted^[92].

xxiv A DVDS allows anyone with a concern about a relationship to obtain information from the police about a partners' previous offending

xxv A proactive risk based approach used by police and professionals to keep victims safe

xxvi Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

It is suggested that the use of the DASH is being inconsistently applied across all police forces, not just West Mercia, and as a result, the College of Policing have piloted a revised risk assessment tool in three police forces. Early evaluation of the new DASH, which has been identified as simpler to use and with more emphasis on coercive and controlling behaviour, has found that the new tool encourages victims to disclose more coercive and controlling behaviour and also increases the accuracy of risk assessments^[93]. **The PCC will hold the force to account to proactively seek opportunities to trial the implementation of such models in West Mercia.**

In 2018, the PCC conducted some consultation work with victims and survivors of domestic abuse who had engaged with the PCC commissioned IDVA service. Several findings from this piece of work confirm the need for earlier intervention and prevention^[94]. Victims felt that:

- ▶ they didn't feel that support services were well advertised, and that greater awareness could be raised through advertising campaigns on bus stops, toilets, trains and other public places;
- ▶ promotion of services available and earlier referrals by GPs, psychologists, social services and other NHS services could be available;
- ▶ if people knew more about when relationships became abusive and where to seek help, there would be less need to get help with police involvement when circumstances became more serious;

- ▶ they want to feel listened to; they want the police to take more notice when a crime is reported; they don't want to keep repeating their story over and over again and they want to be aware of domestic violence within diversity groups.

In addition to this, SafeLives have conducted some research with survivors and concluded that local commissioners should sponsor public awareness campaigns which draw attention to the dynamics and risks of psychological violence; and challenge the normalisation of psychologically abusive behaviours with a focus on those who perpetrate the abuse^[95].

The PCC will work with the Force and partners to develop a programme of domestic abuse awareness raising activity, to include specifically targeted areas of focus and adapting materials accordingly (males, BAME communities, older people, young people).

Integrated family model of support

To prevent violence from escalating and reduce the harm caused, it is imperative to recognise how domestic abuse impacts upon family members and consider approaches which identify the needs of the whole family. Examples of approaches endorsed and funded by the government in the National VAWG strategy include the SafeLives One Front Door model^[96]. The One Front Door model helps to make the link between the risks faced by the victims, child safeguarding needs and the risks posed by the perpetrators of abuse^[97].

The PCC has been involved in several discussions both nationally and locally which look at early intervention and safeguarding multi-agency models for the whole family, including the SafeLives One Front Door model. **The PCC will continue to work with local and national partners to explore implementation of such models in West Mercia, sharing best practice and evidence bases accordingly.**

The 2017 JTAI report suggests that 'More thought needs to be given to how local areas can collectively supply the emotional, psychological and practical support that is needed to help children and victims - or families that have stayed together - get safe, stay safe and move on to reach their full potential.' The report also calls for a national public service initiative to raise awareness of domestic abuse and violence as well as a greater focus on perpetrators and better prevention strategies^[98].

In the context of Adolescent to Parent Violence, a varied and proportionate range of responses is needed to create change and increase safety for the young person and their family. Before any intervention is attempted by practitioners, there needs to be a considered approach reflecting the whole family's dynamics. Practitioners need to consider the family as a system and how its members operate together and consider the use of whole family approaches. Adolescent violence and abuse should not be seen as independent of these dynamics^[99].

It is important to consider the role of health based service provision when understanding how domestic abuse can be challenged and tackled.

We know that pregnancy increases the risk of domestic abuse and that many victims have been in contact with several health services before accessing support or seeking help^[100]. Within the £66bn cost of domestic abuse for 2016/17, £2.6billion was at a cost to the health service^{xxvii}, lower than the £1.3 billion to police^[101].

The Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) model, is a GP based domestic violence and abuse (DVA) training support and referral programme which has been evaluated by randomised controlled trial. The model is a collaboration between primary care and third sector organisations specialising in DVA. It involves GP practices having an advocate educator who is based in a specialist domestic abuse service working in partnership with a local clinical lead to co-deliver training and education across practices supported by the programme. The evaluation concluded that women attending intervention practices were 22 times more likely than those attending control practices to have a discussion with their clinician about a referral to an advocate. This resulted in them being six times more likely to be referred to an advocate^[102].

Currently, there are no IRIS programmes operating in West Mercia. **The PCC will work with partners in health to share best practice around the IRIS model and work with Public Health and CCG commissioners to explore joint commissioning opportunities where appropriate.**

xxvii The estimates included may be an under or over estimation of the cost of health services depending on whether domestic abuse victims follow the trends for medical assistance for all crime.

Perpetrators

The best long-term outcome for any child (and victim) is that the abusive parent/perpetrator changes their behaviour. An abuser who stops abusing can have a safe relationship with that child, but also no longer poses a threat in any other future relationship^[103]. We know that less than 1% of domestic abuse perpetrators receive a specialist intervention and as a result of this, there is a high level of repeat perpetration, often with multiple victims^[104]. **The PCC will include perpetrator interventions (both adult and young perpetrators) in the domestic abuse commissioning plan.**

However, there is a significant gap nationally in the provision of evidence based programmes which are designed to tackle and disrupt perpetrator behaviour. Any effective perpetrator intervention needs to be of a high quality and conform to set standards. The government support the work of Respect, who have designed a set of accredited standards for any perpetrator intervention^[105]. **The PCC will ensure that where funding is allocated to a perpetrator programme, that they are only those who have been awarded Respect accreditation.**

Effective perpetrator programmes should also be flexible, trauma informed and adapted to accommodate people's individual needs and circumstances^[106]. The Government is seeking to produce guidance which promotes such principles. Perpetrator programmes should also assess the housing needs of service users and consider whether support with housing for the perpetrator would disrupt the abusive behaviour.

This should be carefully managed alongside safeguarding processes for the victim, and child protection procedures if children are involved in the case^[107]. **The PCC will ensure that these recommendations are taken into account when commissioning perpetrator interventions.**

For a long time, youth justice professionals have reported high occurrences of family violence, and in many cases adolescent to parent violence and abuse^[108]. However, nationally and for West Mercia, evidence of prevalence is piecemeal. APVA is not specifically recorded on police systems. **The PCC will work with the force, Youth Justice Service and other partners to consider the recording of APVA on local systems to create an understanding of need.**

The Home Office has recommended several intervention programmes for young people displaying APVA, which have an emerging evidence base. One of these programmes include the Respect Young Peoples Programme, a programme which focusses on interventions with young people who use violence and abuse in close relationships. This includes relationship abuse, adolescent to parent violence or abusive behaviour within the family such as sibling abuse or young parent abuse^[109]. Consultation from survivors in West Mercia recommends training to be provided on abuse towards parents as they feel that this a gap in service provision. **The PCC will work with Youth Justice Service and the Local Safeguarding Children's boards, to explore opportunities for commissioning such services and training, depending upon need.**

SafeLives, Respect and Social Finance have formed a partnership to create 'Drive', an intensive intervention that works with high-harm and serial perpetrators to challenge behaviour and prevent abuse, whilst providing support to the victim. Drive employs a whole system approach using an intensive case management system alongside a coordinated multi-agency response^[110].

The Drive model has been piloted in three areas of the Country and is being independently evaluated by University of Bristol over a three year period. Findings from the Year 2 report show that the number of Drive service users using each type of DVA behaviour reduced substantially with^[111]:

- physical abuse reduced by over 60%;
- sexual abuse reduced by over 75%;
- controlling behaviour reduced by over 50%;
- harassment and stalking reduced by over 50%;
- IDVA also reported risk to the victim reduced in 75% of the cases.

The government recognises the Drive programme as an innovative model, focused on early intervention, tackling re-victimisation, taking a whole family approach and a long term goal of independence based on victims' needs and choices and is supportive of such approaches^[112].

The PCC has developed closed working relationships with representatives of the Drive project and in 2018, the Drive project was launched in Worcestershire, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council.

Funding was provided by both PCC and WCC alongside the Police Transformation Fund to deliver the 21 month pilot. This pilot was originally due to end in June 2020 but has now been extended until 31 March 2021, with funding provided from both the PCC and Worcestershire Public Health.

The PCC will work with Worcestershire Public Health and other partners to explore possible joint commissioning opportunities for the provision of holistic domestic abuse provision to be implemented from April 2021, linked to the Drive project.

Through the Shropshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the PCC has provided funding for the provision of a domestic violence perpetrator programme (DVPP) in Shropshire. The DVPP, entitled **Becoming Respectful** has been developed with the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company and Sea Change^[113]. It is a group based programme and the pilot in Shropshire is being evaluated by Chester University. The final report is due late summer 2019. **The PCC will ensure that they see sight of the evaluation and work with the local CSPs to inform future perpetrator provision, recognising that local areas may have different demands.**

Global work is underway by the government to understand what works in early intervention and tackling perpetrators. In West Mercia, we are working closely with the local universities to evidence the impact of commissioned activity which targets perpetrators. Programmes which are targeted at domestic abuse perpetrators need to be delivered safely and effectively to ensure further harm to the victim is not caused.

The government have supported the use of various protection orders to tackle perpetrators, such as the Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs, DVPOs) and encourage wide use of these orders to support victims. For West Mercia, in the year ending March 2019, 177 DVPNs were issued and 145 DVPOs were granted^[114]. When comparing these to the numbers of crimes for the same year, this figure is low.

The new draft Domestic Abuse Bill also proposes to introduce the use of a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order (DAPN and DAPO) which will allow criminal sanctions to be implemented for breaches of the orders, replacing the DVPN and DVPO^[115].

Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders are another example of orders to protect victims. The FGM orders were introduced in 2015 and aim to “protect a girl at risk of FGM or one against whom an FGM offence has been committed”^[116].

We know that early intervention in stalking cases is important to break the cycle of obsession and fixation. By recognising stalking behaviours and enforcing prohibitive measures to stop them, front-line officers can protect victims at the earliest possible stage. In 2019, a new Stalking Protection Order (SPO) was developed. The SPO is designed to improve the safety of all stalking victims by giving police the authority to address the danger that perpetrators pose while they gather more evidence. SPOs will allow police to apply to restrict perpetrators actions, for example stopping them from contacting or getting to close to their victim. They could even require stalkers to be psychologically assessed or to attend rehabilitation programmes to help prevent reoffending^[117].

The government want to see increases in the range of domestic abuse related protection orders being used across the country^[118].

“ ... more joint working and joint agency communication is required; both to service users as well as between the services ... ”

8. Provision of services

Since 2014, PCCs have had devolved responsibility of the provision of support services to victims of crime on a local level from the Ministry of Justice^[119], recognising that local areas are better placed to assess need and design good quality, effective service provision^[120].

Details of the funding provided specifically for domestic abuse by the PCC in West Mercia in 2019/20 can be seen in the table on page 40.

There is no generic approach to providing services for victims of violence or abuse and the provision provided should meet the needs of the diverse range of victims whether long term residents of that area or victims who have moved in more recently^[121].

When thinking about how children who have been affected by domestic abuse can best be supported, it is important not to assume that the level of impact is greater if they have directly witnessed or experienced it. We also need to consider how we support those children who aren't coming to the attention of any agency and are suffering in silence. **The PCC will work with partners to conduct consultation work specifically with children who have been affected by domestic abuse (both as a witness and a victim) to ensure their voice is heard and to inform service provision/ need.**

When commissioning services to tackle and disrupt domestic abuse, best practice has been identified by government as local areas who take a strategic approach to this responsibility and wish to see the following replicated across the country^[122]:

- carry out evidence-based assessments of need, drawing on the best available data, and taking into account the particular needs of BME women and those with complex needs;
- base commissioning on their local needs assessment and the best available evidence of what works, innovating where necessary to meet new or complex challenges;
- pool budgets across different agencies to make best use of available resources;
- design coherent pathways of support and incorporating innovative approaches to early intervention, including support for all family members, including children;
- involve local third sector organisations in commissioning, recognising that they have important insight into victims' needs, including those from BME backgrounds;
- show strong leadership and prioritisation of VAWG, supported by clear local accountability for service provision;
- know that victims may travel far from home when fleeing violence, so ensure their provision is open to all (recognising that some women from their own area are likely to seek support elsewhere);

Service - 2019/20 funding	Description	PCC Funding	Area
IDVA - Independent Domestic Violence Advisor	Provision of community and hospital based IDVAs	£558,260	West Mercia
Children and Young People's service	Deliver interventions designed to support children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse	£39,570	West Mercia
Domestic Abuse resource - VAL	To provide a specialist domestic abuse resource to co-locate within the VAL, providing specialist support and advice	£45,000	West Mercia
Drive	To provide a team of Service and Case Managers, working with high risk domestic abuse perpetrators	£114,121 (contribution to a larger pot)	Worcestershire
Sanctuary Provision	Provision of security equipment designed to keep victims safer in home	£10,000	Telford & Wrekin (CSP)
		£3,000	Shropshire (CSP)
Inspiring Families	A programme which works with families where	£7,550	Herefordshire (CSP)
White Ribbon		£2,500	Telford & Wrekin (CSP)
Domestic Abuse training	Training & awareness for professionals	£1,530	Shropshire (CSP)
Domestic Abuse Helpline	Contribute towards provision of a 24 hour domestic abuse helpline for West Mercia	£5,000	Shropshire (CSP)
Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC)	Contribute towards training for the implementation of an evidence based assessment tool to be used with children affected by domestic abuse	£3,000	Shropshire (CSP)
Totals		£789,531	

-
- ▶ collaborate across local authority and service boundaries, recognising that provision must be flexible to meet victim's needs.

The PCC will ensure that the above design principles are incorporated into the PCC's DA Commissioning Plan.

The PCC has commissioned several victim and offender needs assessments including domestic abuse. These needs assessments are due to be completed in 2019 and will inform future service provision. **The PCC will ensure that the needs assessment identifies the demand for specialist services working with all domestic abuse victims and survivors, including those groups who are marginalised or hidden within services.**

The PCC is also working with Worcestershire County Council to understand and implement the learning from their recently completed (2019) pilot project which provided support to BAME communities who have been affected by domestic abuse. The feedback gave a real insight into how service users accessed services, what their support needs were and how they viewed current service provision.

One of the main points of feedback from this report was that language was a barrier to accessing services and that communication, publicity and support materials should be available in various languages to encourage support. Social media and the internet were suggested as common areas where services could be promoted. There were also suggestions that support services needed to adapt to ensure that they had an understanding of various cultures and how they can tailor their service offer accordingly^[123].

The PCC will use his convening powers to ensure that learning from the project is shared with partner agencies and that any PCC commissioned services have adequate plans to take into account the feedback from the project to develop service provision.

In 2019, the IDVA service was re-commissioned and along with a significant uplift in funding, the service now provides IDVA's in hospital based setting. Previous research conducted by SafeLives found that hospital based IDVAs were; more likely to engage with those groups of victims who may be less visible to services (including those with high levels of complex or multiple needs), more likely to reach very vulnerable victims and more likely to identify victims earlier^[124].

Previously, the PCC trialled hospital IDVA's (HIDVA) in Worcestershire in 2015 and the evaluation confirmed that the specialist support offered could unpick more risk factors than was possible for health professionals. This is most likely due to the level of experience and knowledge the specialist had in relation to domestic violence and abuse and also because the HIDVA is dedicated solely to this type of work. Using a survivor's case study, the evaluation concluded that the cost of a HIDVA supported case was approximately £13,700 compared to £259,000 for a non HIDVA supported case^[125]. **The PCC will use this evaluation and the performance and outcome reporting from the new service to develop an evidence based business case to support future cross-sector buy-in for commissioning.**

Feedback from the PCC consultation work with victims and survivors who had used the IDVA service in West Mercia showed that men felt that they were poorly represented in the field as they felt 'there is a gender bias and that services need to focus on engaging men and other diverse groups'^[126]. **The PCC will ensure that commissioned services have an adequate plan for engaging male victims and survivors and diverse groups and that oversight and scrutiny is provided through contract/review meetings.**

The PCC will consider specific funding envelopes designed to support marginalised groups, recognising that there may be a need to develop specialist capacity locally to deliver this provision.

Currently in West Mercia, several of the local authorities provide funding for domestic abuse support services, although there is no current statutory requirement placed on them for this provision^[127]. Although the IDVAs work with high risk victims, the PCC works closely with the local authorities in West Mercia to ensure that support services for all victims of domestic abuse are easily accessible and that pathways of support are coherent, particularly as the IDVA role is intended to be a short-term, high-intensity level of support. Often, referrals from IDVA are made to onward support services so it is important for the PCC to have oversight of funding and service provision.

The government is currently conducting a consultation on a new statutory duty which would be placed on local authorities to provide support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children (in accommodation based services), ensuring they have access to provision that is right for them^[128].

The PCC will continue to actively engage with local authorities around domestic abuse service provision and if necessary, use powers to influence funding decisions.

Funding is provided by the PCC to Community Safety Partnerships in West Mercia to support their statutory requirements and priorities. As we have seen earlier in this document, the CSPs across West Mercia have all identified domestic abuse as a priority. **The PCC will ensure that CSPs allocate a proportionate amount of their PCC funding for domestic abuse provision in their area.**

Due to the increase in reporting of domestic abuse, additional pressure has been placed on victims' services and quite often, those services focus on high risk victims and crisis interventions. We know from analysing PCC commissioned services as well as police reports that demand is ever increasing. The government is clear that more must be done to reform services to support earlier models of intervention with victims, perpetrators and their families, at the same time as maintaining crisis provision. The national landscape for funding for domestic abuse is also fragmented. Many areas struggle with disparate local funding streams, short-term funding and disjointed local commissioning practices. This can make it difficult for victims to access services and for those who can access services, provision can be sporadic and unequal^[129].

The Home Office have produced a National Statement of Expectations (NSE) which sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to VAWG issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need^[130].

The expectation is that services:

- ▶ put the victim at the centre of service delivery;
- ▶ have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe;
- ▶ take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG;
- ▶ are locally led and safeguard individuals at every point;
- ▶ raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.

The PCC will develop a primary, secondary and tertiary prevention commissioning model which will allow for longevity and security of service provision and centre around the national statement of expectations.

In 2019, the PCC decided to conduct further consultation work with domestic abuse victims and survivors and has commissioned a further piece of consultation work with domestic abuse victims across West Mercia. The purpose of this work is to understand the landscape better and seek the views and thoughts of victims and survivors.

The PCC will further develop consultation work with victims and will work with Police and partners to develop a victim led domestic abuse advisory group, linking into the Victims Board, and incorporate the learning from this group into commissioning activity.

Homelessness

Under the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002, a person has a priority need for housing provision if they are vulnerable as a result of having to leave accommodation because of violence from another person, or threats of violence from another person that are likely to be carried out^[131].

For victims at risk from highly dangerous perpetrators, refuges will usually be the most appropriate choice. Refuges provide key short term, intensive support for those who flee from abuse. Given the intensity of the support and the vulnerability of the victims, attention should be paid to the length of time they spend in a refuge^[132].

In 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued a consultation on the government's proposals for a new approach to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England. The consultation proposed the introduction of a statutory duty on local authorities to provide support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children, ensuring they have access to provision that is right for them^[133].

The consultation also suggested the development of Local Partnership Boards, multi-agency partnership boards whose focus is on the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children. These LPBs would include PCC representation^[134].

Substance misuse

We know that there is an increased prevalence of substance misuse where domestic abuse is present. Research by SafeLives shows that at least 1 in 10 victims of domestic abuse have substance misuse issues themselves although this figure is expected to be below the true reflection^[135]. Victims may use substances as a coping mechanism and perpetrators may use them as a form of coercion and control. Domestic abuse perpetration can arise from withdrawal from substances and disputes about buying substances^[136].

Responses from the draft domestic abuse consultation suggested that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to require multi-agency support and that staff in substance misuse services should be better trained in how to use referral pathways to each other's services effectively^[137].

In 2019, the PCC and the Force launched the new Victim Advice Line (VAL), a free and confidential service to anyone who has been impacted by crime. This transformational project was led by the PCC with the aim of enabling victims and survivors to have a coordinated, single point of contact for whom they can talk to and get advice and support without having to keep re-telling their story over and over again.

VAL is working closely with specialist services, including local domestic abuse support services to ensure that victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access the specialist support that they need in a timely way. The PCC has also provided funding for specialist domestic abuse resource to be co-located within VAL.

As part of the PCC led transformation programme, a new role of Head of Victim Services was created and appointed to. **The PCC will ensure that there are clear referral pathways between commissioned domestic abuse and other specialist services and assess the requirement of specialist workers in each other's services, ensuring a holistic approach to service provision is provided.**

The government have committed to providing support not just for victims, but for their families and have provided extra funding to the Ministry of Justice's national Homicide Service as well as the organisation Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse to increase awareness of provision of advocacy for bereaved families and ensure that they are supported to contribute towards Domestic Homicide Reviews (explored later in this document)^[138]. **The PCC will ensure that partners are aware that this is a national service and ensure that victims' families are made aware of the offer through partners. The PCC will explore opportunities within the VAL for provision of this service.**

Isolation is one of the key factors experienced by victims in an abusive relationship. In West Mercia, our victims told us that they felt they had lost their voice and felt isolated in their abusive relationships. Isolation and lack of support were also key findings from the recent National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) report into domestic abuse in rural areas^[139].

Other findings from the report indicated several key concerning factors which are:

- abuse lasts, on average, 25% longer in the most rural areas;
- the policing response is largely inadequate;
- the more rural the setting, the higher the risk of harm;
- rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers;
- close-knit rural communities facilitate abuse;
- traditional, patriarchal communities control and subjugate women;
- support services are scarce - less available, less visible and less effective;
- retreating rural resources make help and escape harder;
- the short-term, often hand-to-mouth funding model has created competing and fragmented service provision;
- an endemic bias against rural communities leads to serious gaps in response and support.

West Mercia has a diverse geographical area which includes rurality. Herefordshire and Shropshire are both classified as **rural** as defined by the Office of National Statistics^[140]. It is important to consider the findings from the above NRCN report when understanding how to support domestic abuse victims and disrupt perpetrator behaviour in West Mercia.

The PCC will ensure that specifications for domestic abuse and victim services in West Mercia consider rurality and work with providers to ensure that delivery better reflects the need of these victims and survivors, ensuring consistent services are provided.

The government have also committed to appointing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, whose role will be to provide public leadership on domestic abuse issues and play a key role in overseeing and monitoring provision of domestic abuse services in England and Wales. Nicole's role will be critical in ensuring consistency and shining a light on both effective and poor practice, holding those delivering such services to account^[141]. **The PCC will ensure that they make contact and work with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner moving forward to ensure that the victim and survivors voice in West Mercia is heard.**

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is a statutory government document which sets out the services which must be provided to victims of crime by organisations in England and Wales. It forms a key part of the wider government strategy to transform the criminal justice system by putting victims first. Under the code, victims of domestic violence are entitled to receive 'enhanced services' when reporting a crime. Enhanced services for these victims include more timely updates about their case, access to special measure in court and referrals to specialist organisations^[142]. Putting victims first is a key priority set out in the West Mercia PCC Safer West Mercia Plan. **The PCC will continue to ensure that a robust monitoring plan is implemented and that particular scrutiny of the code is conducted for victims of domestic abuse to ensure that these enhanced services are being provided.**

In 2018, the government developed the first Victims Strategy, a cross government strategy which sets out a criminal justice system wide response to improving the support offered to victims of crime and incorporates actions from all criminal justice agencies, including the Police, Crown Prosecution Service and courts^[143].

The Victims' Strategy sets out that victims need:

- ▶ timely and accurate information and communication;
- ▶ fair treatment during the justice process;
- ▶ effective multi-agency working;
- ▶ professional, targeted victims' services.

One of the objectives from the strategy is to roll out a new framework to improve the criminal justice response and support for domestic abuse cases. This has been developed and the West Midlands Crown Prosecution Service have co-ordinated a multi-agency forum designed to ensure the framework is implemented in the West Midlands area, of which West Mercia is included. Through the Victims Board, the PCC has adopted the governance for the implementation of the best practice framework and has regular oversight of the implementation through this board.

Many victims of crime experience a lack of consistent information, along with an uncoordinated approach which can make the whole process of seeking support frustrating, reducing the positive impact upon commissioned services. Providing PCCs with commissioning responsibilities has enabled services to adapt to local victim needs^[144].

The government suggest that there are some really positive interactions between police and victims, but recognise that there is no consistent training across forces dealing with victims, particularly where specialist skills are required, such as domestic abuse^[145]. Domestic Abuse Matters is an innovative training programme which has been developed by the College of Policing with SafeLives and includes evaluation of local delivery^[146].

In 2018, West Mercia commenced the roll out of DA Matters training to all officers, with a target achievement rate of 75%. This is a rolling programme of training. The Force Learning and Development team have been trained in delivering this programme to ensure sustainability. Responses from the domestic abuse bill consultation advised that effectiveness of training should be monitored or assessed and that any training should incorporate an understanding of how domestic abuse affects groups of people differently^[147]. West Mercia have also developed DA Matters 'champions' with the aim of having one on every shift, providing specialist expertise to colleagues in domestic abuse cases. This will be scrutinised as part of the PCC holding to account process.

“ ... 25% of participants would have liked help for the abusive partner to change their behaviour ... ”

9. Partnership working

No single agency can tackle domestic abuse alone.

Multi-agency working has had a positive impact on tackling domestic abuse and it is a model which the government wish to see developed. Tackling domestic abuse requires a number of organisations in both the statutory services and voluntary and community sector services to work together^[148]. The NSE also sets out guidelines to ensure that local commissioners work in partnership to provide services.

It is becoming more and more important that we look at a 'whole family approach' - no single agency can tackle domestic abuse on their own and domestic abuse needs to be seen as **everyone's business**^[149]. We need to consider how we can work with agencies better to ensure that we are supporting victims and children as well as challenging and disrupting perpetrator behaviour. Many agencies themselves have adopted their own domestic abuse policies and conduct regular domestic abuse awareness training.

Although there are some predictive factors which can be linked with a higher risk of becoming a victim as explained previously in this strategy, we must continue to increase opportunities for victims to come forward and to work alongside local agencies and organisations to share information and best practice on VAWG issues^[150].

In West Mercia, a number of multi-agency information sharing arrangements are in place such as MARAC^{xxviii} and MASH^{xxix}. In addition to this, some local areas in West Mercia have adopted daily domestic abuse meetings where key agencies discuss domestic abuse incidents which

have occurred overnight and put plans of action into place to disrupt behaviour and support victims and children.

However, a recent HIMCFRS PEEL inspection report for West Mercia identified that the force should review the MARAC referral process and consider the need for greater partner involvement in the decision making process to ensure high risk victims of domestic abuse victims are not being placed at further risk as a result^[151].

As part of the delivery of Drive in Worcestershire, the PCC has worked with partners in West Mercia to develop a Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel. The panel is multi-agency with partners from police, health, housing, children's services, probation and adult safeguarding amongst others in attendance. The panel meet and discuss suitability of cases to be referred to Drive, but for those who are not suitable, robust disruption plans are in place for perpetrators.

The PCC has also commissioned University of Worcester to provide an evaluation of the local impact of Drive and the setup of the DAPPs. The evaluation will provide valuable information around the impact that the setup of DAPP has on partners and also the impact upon Police demand. Some of the findings from the first draft of the evaluation report have demonstrated more joined up working between partner agencies, earlier identification of victims who have not previously engaged with support services and partners identifying it as providing a **whole family approach**^[152]. Final evaluation is due in 2020. **The PCC will work with the force and partners to use the learning from pilot initiatives such as Drive to explore opportunities for expansion into West Mercia wide service provision.**

xxviii Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - <http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/MARAC%20FAQs%20General%20FINAL.pdf>

xxix Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/working-together-to-safeguard-children-multi-agency-safeguarding-hubs>

In 2018 in Shropshire, a pilot was conducted in partnership between the Police and West Mercia Women's Aid, to trial an IDVA attending high risk domestic abuse cases along with a police offer as part of an initial response package of support. An evaluation report from this pilot has been completed and out of the numbers of victim/survivors who engaged in the service, 59% of them had not previously engaged with specialist domestic abuse services, evidencing that the pilot assisted with earlier intervention by specialist agencies. 44% of the victim/survivors were assessed as **medium risk** and following the intervention from the IDVA, could have been prevented from the risk escalating^[153].

Local areas should develop more integrated approaches to multi-agency working which looks at victims, their families and perpetrators in the round, according to the government^[154]. In West Mercia, the PCC has been working with several of the local authorities to explore feasibility of implementing the Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding model. The FSM is a whole-system reform of Children's services which aims to improve the quality of work undertaken with families, and thereby outcomes for children and parents. It brings together many specialist workers including domestic abuse along with training and an improved practice framework for staff. The model has been evaluated and initial findings from the implementation of the model suggested an annual 58% reduction in repeat incidents reported to police^[155]. **The PCC will work with partners to explore opportunities for closer partnership working and joint commissioning opportunities to achieve shared outcomes through such national best practice multi-agency models.**

In addition to the Drive service provider, who are working with the perpetrator, and the IDVA service who are working with the victim, the PCC has also commissioned West Mercia Women's Aid to deliver a Children and Young Person's programme for children whose parents are part of the Drive and IDVA services. The introduction of this service enables multiple partner agencies to work together to provide a **whole family response**. The impact of the CYP service is being evaluated by the central Drive team. **The PCC will continue to have oversight of this evaluation to inform future commissioning intentions.**

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is another example of multi-agency working. A DHR is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with who they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Since 13 April 2011 there has been a statutory requirement for local areas to conduct a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets the criteria^[156]. The completion of a DHR is the responsibility of the Community Safety Partnerships, of which there are five in West Mercia. **The PCC will use his convening powers through the Crime Reduction Board to ensure that CSPs adopt a continuous improvement approach to implementation of the recommendations from any DHRs which occur.**

The government has emphasised their commitment to tackling FGM by updating their 2016 multi-agency guidance to make it statutory guidance for those who have a responsibility to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults^[157]. The guidance places several duties and responsibilities upon the police. West Mercia have developed a policy around FGM and have appointed FGM specialist single points of contact (SPOCs) in the area. The under-reporting of it is potentially a concern though.

We have already seen previously that victims of HBV are likely to have no recourse to public funds and that those who have no recourse face additional barriers to access services. In 2015, the PCC funded £50,000 to West Mercia Women's Aid for the specific provision of services to support these victims. The PCC is continuously monitoring the spend relating to this. **The PCC will use the aforementioned needs assessment to identify the level of need for those with NRPF in West Mercia and consider future funding for this provision.**

The PCC funds each of the CSPs an amount of funding to contribute towards analytical provision for each partnership. In 2018, the PCC worked with the CSPs and the force to direct this funding towards a newly created team of Partnership Analysts, hosted by West Mercia Police within the Analysis & Service Improvement team. The role of the partnership analysts is to collate and analyse data from a wide variety of partners to support and inform evidence based decision making within the CSPs.

The recent consultation response from the government's draft domestic abuse bill stressed the importance of using data from across a number of sources including data from third sector organisations and ensuring the best possible use is made of existing evidence and analysis^[158]. **As domestic abuse is a priority for all CSPs, the PCC will task the Partnership Analysts to create West Mercia domestic abuse profiles to truly understand the complete picture of all forms of domestic abuse in West Mercia.**

Employers have a critical role in both identifying abuse and developing robust workplace policies to support employees who may be victims of domestic abuse^[159]. Public Health England have published a domestic abuse toolkit that will help raise awareness of the issue with employers and provide guidance on how they can support those affected by it. The toolkit recognises that employers are in a unique position to create a supportive workplace culture that encourages the identification of health and wellbeing needs and to help break the silence around this issue^[160]. **The PCC will ensure that all commissioned and grant funded services have an employee domestic abuse policy and that this is written into the terms and conditions of the grant/contract.**

West Mercia Police currently employs 4,200 officers and staff and is working on the development of an employee domestic abuse policy. The PCC chairs several multi-agency partnership boards such as the West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, Crime Reduction Board and Victims Boards.

The PCC will use his convening powers, via these strategic groups, to emphasise the importance of all agencies to have a specific employee domestic abuse policy and to ensure that each policy has a specific implementation plan around awareness raising and access to specialist services amongst all partners and staff. The PCC will ensure that the force policy includes victims as well as those who have been identified as perpetrators.

The PCC has worked with each of the local authorities in West Mercia to participate in the development of their individual domestic abuse strategies. When looking at service provision for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, the government see PCCs as ideally placed to bring all local commissioners together, including those from health and local authorities, to develop collaborative and joined up commissioning^[161]. **The PCC will create a PCC hosted, West Mercia, Domestic Abuse commissioners partnership to explore collaborative working and joint commissioning opportunities.**

Sanctuary schemes are a multi-agency victim centred initiative set up by government in 2010 which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures and support. The provision of **sanctuary** within a property means that security measures have been installed in order that households at risk of domestic violence are able to remain safely in their own accommodation and where the perpetrator does not live in the property, if they choose to do so^[162].

Research provided to government suggest that Sanctuary Schemes have a number of benefits both for service users and local agencies. Benefits for agencies include a reduction in homelessness caused by domestic violence and a potential reduction in repeat victimisation for Sanctuary Scheme users which have the potential to produce significant cost savings for housing providers and the criminal justice system^[163].

The PCC currently ring-fences a proportion of funding allocated to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) for sanctuary provision, proving support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Many of the sanctuary schemes are linked in with police teams such as the Design Out Crime Officers (DOCOs). **The PCC will continue to ensure that CSP funding is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of the sanctuary scheme.**

Integrated Offender Management (IOM), is an existing model which brings a cross-agency response to the crime and re-offending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.

IOM helps to improve the quality of life in communities by:

- reducing the negative impact of crime and re-offending;
- reducing the number of people who become victims of crime;
- helping to improve the public's confidence in the criminal justice system^[164].

The model was developed back in 2015 and is implemented in West Mercia. Partners meet once a month and meetings are held before the DAPPs meetings. Funding has also previously been provided to the IOM team in West Mercia for provision of services which meet the core objectives of the model. Some of the IOM cohort are domestic abuse perpetrators.

In addition to IOM, there is also MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) which is the process through which various agencies such as the police, the Prison Service and Probation work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community^[165]. Some of these violent offenders will also be domestic abuse offenders and some of these will cross over into one or more of the following groups; MARAC, DAPP, IOM or MAPPA, often being discussed at multiple meetings by the same agencies. **The PCC is currently working with the Force to undertake a review of the current IOM process. The PCC will continue this joint working approach to the development of multi-agency offender management processes, ensuring that processes are aligned and have a domestic abuse focus.**

In terms of working in partnership to protect older and vulnerable people from domestic abuse, it's important to consider statutory safeguarding policies and procedures. The recent HMCPSI and HMICFRS inspection report into crimes against older people found that adult safeguarding was described to them as the **poor relation** of safeguarding arrangements, with inconsistent local partnership work to consider what protections or support might need to be put in place for vulnerable adults.

Forces told of a focus on children over adults, and the inspection found a lack of understanding of what their duties were under the Care Act 2014 regarding adults at risk^[166].

This is compounded by the SafeLives research which tells us that a common barrier for older domestic abuse victims is instances where the perpetrator is their carer which can present difficulties which raises a wealth of additional challenges and forms of abuse. In addition to this, in cases where the cared for ends up being the perpetrator due to medical conditions which exacerbate aggression such as dementia. In these situations, victims may feel guilt connected to any disclosure. Complexities also arise around police making decisions to remove people from houses or relationships where there is a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia.

The use of digital technology is something which the PCC is very keen on supporting and developing to enhance service provision to the public. However, it is also important to recognise that perpetrators can use technology as a form of abuse, further enhancing their level of control over the victim. 87% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2019, as reported by the Office for National Statistics^[167].

It is also something which has been drawn to the attention of others in a 2019 report produced by Think Social Tech, Snook and SafeLives. The research conducted as part of the report discovered new priorities working in the domestic abuse field, particularly in terms of the need for more recovery support^[168].

As the technology landscape is growing and developing, there is a growing need to make better use of technology to deliver services, whilst mitigating the risks. The report concluded as we have seen previously in this document that many people face additional barriers to seeking support and that online tools and anonymous support could offer an invaluable support approach. It overwhelmingly concluded that there is a joint responsibility to ensure victims, survivors, and the services supporting them, can make best use of technology^[169]. **The PCC will work with partners and stakeholders to explore innovative and creative ways in which digital technology can be used to tackle and disrupt domestic abuse behaviour alongside providing support to victims and survivors.**

“ ... the whole systems family and agency approach that has begun to be rolled out across West Mercia should continue ... ”

10. Pursuing perpetrators

Although early intervention and prevention is key to tackling domestic abuse, we must continue to improve the pursuing of perpetrators and the criminal justice response. The criminal justice response to perpetrators needs to be improved through better multi-agency working with other statutory partners, better use of risk assessment to identify perpetrators, and clearer pathways for managing, monitoring and mitigating the risk that perpetrators pose according to the government^[170].

Improving the police response

We know that on average, a victim of domestic abuse has experienced the abuse on average 50 times before getting effective help^[171]. This makes it critical that when victims make the call to police, that they get the right service at the right time, every time.

In 2019, HMICFRS assessed the national police response to domestic abuse. Pleasingly, the report confirmed that police forces continue to prioritise tackling domestic abuse within the wider context of supporting vulnerable people and keeping them safe. It also identified improvements in control room responses, quality of investigations and the increase in numbers of investigations where victims don't support an investigation. However, a number of issues were raised about the national police response to DA suggesting that; delays in sending officers are exposing victims to risk, the understanding of controlling and coercive behaviour needs to improve and the police need to do more to seek feedback from victims of domestic abuse^[172].

In the 2019 HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report, specific to West Mercia, the force were reported to have a good understanding of vulnerability, which includes the important of identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people. However, the report did state that West Mercia needs to improve the way in which it protects vulnerable people, and is missing opportunities to make arrests in some domestic abuse cases. It needs to be sure it is producing thorough DASH risk assessments and that it could use pre-charge bail more effectively^[173].

Response officers were found not have the training to investigate some of the crimes that are allocated to them. During the inspection, there were examples of officers investigating complex fraud and high-risk, serious domestic assault cases without the skills or support to do so. However, the force has been encouraging positive action by response officers who attend reports of domestic abuse. Effective working between departments, and a proactive approach to promptly identify and arrest suspects, is also evident^[174].

In relation to harassment and stalking specifically, in 2017, HMICFRS and HMCPSP^{xxx} produced a report into the police and CPS response. The report found that stalking in particular was misunderstood by the police and CPS and as a result, often went unrecognised. The report also found that the absence of a single accepted, consistent definition of stalking is a very significant contributory factor to the unacceptably low number of recorded crimes and prosecutions. It is also one of the main reasons that police officers, staff and prosecutors gave varying interpretations of stalking^[175].

Summary of findings from the report are that:

- ▶ crimes of harassment and stalking reported by victims were sometimes not recorded at all;
- ▶ when crimes were recorded, they were sometimes not recorded correctly;
- ▶ cases of stalking were sometimes recorded as harassment.

There is not an exhaustive definition of stalking in legislation. This is one of the main reasons why there is a lack of common understanding about which actions can be counted as stalking. At present, identifying stalking is frequently a matter of subjectivity, which can lead to error and/or omission, as found in the case file review^[176].

HMICFRS also found that due to the variations between forces in the way that stalking offences were recorded, they could not be confident in the accuracy of the recorded crime figures in any of the forces visited. There were a number of recommendations which came from the report. The College of Policing is currently developing a suite of new guidance on stalking and harassment to give officers clear advice on what they should seek to achieve in each case and how to understand the nature of the behaviour with which they are dealing. This new guidance will be published in early 2019^[177].

The recording of domestic abuse crimes within West Mercia was identified as an area for improvement in a recent HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity report and suggested that the force needs to improve how it records violent crimes, particularly harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and domestic abuse-related crimes^[178].

The report also commented on the force's diary appointment system for low-risk domestic abuse incidents, where officers should attend within 48 hours and found that in many cases, this timeframe is not being met, depriving some victims of the support they need and deserve.

The PCC will use his holding to account process to expose and scrutinise the Force approach to domestic abuse.

The CPS response

The government want to see increases in prosecutions in VAWG related offences, where appropriate. The Crown Prosecution Services is committed to seeing perpetrators brought to justice and providing the best possible protection for victims from re-offending and in doing so, are focusing on working as collaboratively as possible across the criminal justice system^[179]. We have already seen that for West Mercia, prosecution rates for domestic abuse related offences are low.

A vital element of an effective response to domestic abuse, is through Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs). These specialist courts were first set up in 2005 across the country and the National SDVC steering group have identified 12 key components to operating successful SDVCs which gain better outcomes for domestic violence. West Mercia has only one SDVC, in Redditch, which was relaunched in 2016 at the Magistrates Court^[180].

The PCC is currently working with the West Midlands, Staffordshire and Warwickshire PCC areas to conduct an independent review into the SDVCs across West Mercia.

The PCC will work with the Local Criminal Justice Boards and Crime Reduction Boards to ensure that the findings and recommendations from this review are implemented, as well as the 12 key components as set out by the National SDVC steering group.

The PCC will work with partners to explore feasibility of setting up SDVCs in other areas of West Mercia.

“ ... there is a continued need for public awareness campaigns about domestic abuse and specialist services, as well as a need for training for local people, particularly important for rural areas ... ”

Female offenders

The MOJ have completed work around female offenders and their research found that almost 60% of the women in custody and supervised in the community had experienced domestic violence^[181].

In their 2018 Female Offender Strategy, the MOJ conclude that being a victim of domestic abuse is a predictor of violent re-offending amongst women. The strategy also highlights the critical need to identify female offenders who have been victims of domestic abuse at the earliest possible opportunity to break the cycle of offending and victimisation^[182]. In order to support the work with female perpetrators, in 2018, the government announced an investment of £2million of funding explicitly for female offenders who have been victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The PCC will consider domestic abuse provision in the context of female offenders and explore diversionary pathway links for female offenders who have also been victims, ensuring equal and consistent access to services.

This goes to further evidence the impact of domestic abuse not only on the victim, but on criminal justice agencies, as well as highlighting the need for a multi-agency, holistic approach to tackling and addressing the needs of these female offenders. The PCC chairs a West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, which is designed to bring partners together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. **The PCC will ensure through the Criminal Justice Board, that there is a designated local response to female offenders who have been affected by domestic abuse, taking into account recommendations from the strategy.**

Supporting victims through the criminal justice system

For any victim of crime, proceeding through the criminal justice system can be a traumatic experience. Due to the complexities of domestic abuse, this experience can be particularly difficult.

- Nationally, for the year ending March 2018, 24% of domestic abuse-related prosecutions were unsuccessful in securing a conviction. Of these unsuccessful convictions, around one-quarter (26%) were due to victim retraction, where the evidence of the victim supports the prosecution case, but the victim refuses to be called as a witness, or retracts or withdraws a complaint^[183].

► Just over one-quarter (26%) of unsuccessful prosecutions were due to victim non-attendance, where the victim is called as a witness in a trial, but fails to attend court. The proportion of unsuccessful prosecutions that resulted in victim non-attendance has increased every year, with the exception of the latest year, which saw a slight fall compared with the previous year^[184].

As you can see, a significant proportion of unsuccessful prosecutions related to victim retraction. The Crown Prosecution Service recognises that in domestic abuse cases, the starting point should be to build cases in which the prosecution does not need to rely on the victim. However, prosecutors should ensure that the views of the complainant are balanced with this approach, and the complainant is not overlooked during proceedings. Victims should be offered practical and emotional support at the earliest opportunity and should have access to any specialist support where needed. Victims receiving speedier attention and respect for their specific needs by the criminal justice system may feel more confident or encouraged to continue support for a prosecution^[185]. **The PCC will, through the VAL, ensure that the victim care co-ordinators are working closely with the Police to ensure that victims are being offered and provided with these support options and that regular dip-sampling of cases is conducted by the VAL to check progress.**

An important factor from a HMICFRS recent PEEL inspection report is that more victims decline to support police action in West Mercia than most other forces^[186].

Joint working by police and prosecutors is required to build a case which could be brought without the complainant's active participation, by seeking out other evidence, where available, which does not focus solely on the complainant's statement^[187].

The same report concluded that the Force has less understanding about suspects who are under investigation but who have not yet been arrested or circulated as wanted on the PNC^{xxxii}. It also identified there is no force-wide collation of wanted suspect information which could show how they are managing higher risk domestic abuse suspects effectively in all areas. The absence of such data means that the force does not pursue these suspects as effectively as it should.

Other areas for improvement were identified in how the force protects vulnerable people. Although the workforce has a good understanding of vulnerability, the inspection found that there was a **drift** in the culture of positive action at domestic abuse incidents within the force. It also concluded that West Mercia creates a greater proportion of domestic abuse reports as emergency or priority responses than the England and Wales rate, which does demonstrate that these cases are appropriately flagged, and is positive. However according to the review undertaken within the inspection, the force does not always give these incidents an appropriate and timely response, potentially putting victims at risk^[188]. **The PCC will use his holding to account process to scrutinise the force approach to domestic abuse, ensuring that it is robust, tailored to need, heavily victim/survivor focused and has a strong emphasis on early identification and intervention and partnership working.**

xxxi Police National Computer

xxxii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Body worn video (BWW) is one of the ways in which the PCC in West Mercia has made improvements to this process. BWW was launched by the PCC in 2017 with a number of objectives, one of which was to increase the potential for a victimless prosecution. In West Mercia for the 2018/19 year, the percentage of domestic abuse crimes where the victim did not support prosecution was 64%^{xxxii}.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is the process of bringing together victims with those responsible for the harm, to find a positive way forward. It's a voluntary process which both parties must agree to. The Victims code sets out that all victims have the right to be provided with information about RJ. In determining whether it is appropriate or not, particular consideration needs to be taken to the sensitivities of the case and the vulnerabilities of the victim, such as domestic violence cases^[189].

Views on the use of restorative justice in domestic abuse cases is mixed nationally. Many say that it is completely not appropriate and in 2016, the MOJ issued a government response to the use of RJ. Their position is that adult perpetrators of domestic abuse should, wherever possible, be prosecuted but recognise that all victims have a right to access restorative justice processes to help them address their needs. They are clear though, that police should not use level one (known as **street**) restorative justice in cases of intimate partner domestic abuse^[190].

In cases involving young people, the principal aim of the youth justice system is to prevent re-offending. A range of statutory obligations emphasise the importance of considering young people's welfare and avoiding **criminalisation** of young people. Responses should be individualistic and proportionate and restorative justice may form part of this response^[191].

Community resolution is an informal police disposal that enables the police to deal more proportionately with low-level crime and anti-social behaviour, outside the formal justice system. They are normally aimed at first time offenders where genuine remorse has been expressed, and where the victim has agreed that they do not want police to take more formal action^[192].

Currently, it is police policy not to use restorative justice or community resolution in domestic abuse cases. The use of such options within a domestic abuse setting needs to be considered carefully. The Crown Prosecution Service advises that restorative justice processes should only take place after cautious consideration and advice from supervisors or experts^[193].

The CPS suggest that it will rarely be appropriate to deal with a domestic abuse case by way of simple caution. However, where a positive action policy has been adhered to, the complainant does not support a prosecution, and the available evidence (including any additional evidence adduced) would only disclose a very minor offence, the police will consider a simple caution in preference to a decision to take no further action. The guidance is clear though that conditional cautions should not be used for domestic abuse cases^[194].

However, in a bid to encourage early intervention and prevent escalation of risk for the victim, a trial project, called Project CARA, gave permission for conditional cautions to be issued for lower risk, normally first time reported, domestic abuse incidents. The evaluation for the project showed that the combination of a conditional caution and a workshop had a positive effect on re-offending rates. As a result of this project, the Director of Public Prosecutions has agreed for some police forces to pilot this approach and the Crown Prosecution Service is working with the National Police Chiefs' Council to agree robust minimum standards^[195].

In the context of Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA), it is important that a young person takes responsibility for their behaviour. While the use of out of court disposals in the context of domestic violence and abuse need to be approached with caution, in the context of cases of APVA out of court disposals or a wrap-around safeguarding response should be considered alongside a criminal justice response as most parents wish to build and maintain their parent-child relationship and do not want their child criminalised. This means that typical domestic violence and abuse responses holding perpetrators to account may not always be appropriate^[196]. **The PCC will hold the force to account to explore the viability and suitability of using a range of criminal justice options in West Mercia to inform a tailored approach to domestic abuse perpetrators.**

The provision of an understanding, respectful and professional first response is vital in determining the future resolution of this family crisis. Parents say that one of the most important factors in their help is to be listened to and believed. It is important for Police to be aware that the young person may have complex needs, such as mental health issues and that there may be a requirement to work with health and social care professionals to support the young person. It is also important that officers recognise the seriousness of this type of abuse. It can be difficult to identify in families where there are other problems and violence is more generalised, but it is a distinct form of domestic abuse, which generally requires a different approach^[197].

In some cases, arrest or temporary removal may be the appropriate response. In others, parents may want someone in authority to speak with the child, but not want them prosecuted or criminalised. They are more likely to engage with other services than the police, because contacting the police is often viewed as a punishment rather than a source of help.

In 2018, it was agreed that PCCs could oversee a new monitoring process which measured criminal justice partners' compliance with the Victims' Code, reporting up to the National Criminal Justice Board. This process was developed by government to assess whether victims receive all necessary information at crucial points in their journey, within the time limits set out by the code, and to a quality standard. In West Mercia, the Victims Board is overseeing this scrutiny. The Victims Board, is a multi-agency group which consists of key partner agencies such as police, courts, Crown Prosecution Service and PCC.

In the response to the government's consultation on the new draft domestic abuse bill, concerns were raised around the family courts' response to potential harm to children and victims, with calls for better protections for children and claims domestic abusers were using the court system to re-traumatise their victims. Responses from the draft bill also identified that due to lack of information sharing across jurisdictions, sometimes sanctions imposed by the family court contravene those issued by a criminal court suggesting better information sharing between these agencies is needed^[198]. This is echoed from the consultation work undertaken in West Mercia^[199] where survivors reported continued abuse from the perpetrator through the court and child contact systems.

As a result, the government made a number of recommendations for improved actions within the bill and in July 2019, launched a call for evidence, which is part of a three-month project overseen by a panel of experts, aimed at throwing a spotlight on how the family courts manage the safety and well-being of children when there is a risk of domestic abuse. The review will also consider the use of **barring orders**- court orders which can prevent abusive parents from making further court applications that often serve to simply re-traumatise their victims. On top of this, new legislation has been introduced which bans abusers from cross-examining their victims in a family court^[200].

It is important, especially from the evidence shown, that the victims experience through family court needs to be monitored. The government are keen to work with stakeholders to understand what more can be done to support victims of domestic abuse in the family court. **The PCC will invite a representative from the family courts in the Victims Board to improve partnership working and support for victims.**

Perpetrator provision

The government is committed to transforming the response to perpetrators of domestic abuse at all points in the criminal justice system, from pre-conviction to custody and through to post-conviction in the community. We cannot simply arrest our way out of domestic abuse. Through supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in perpetrators themselves, it is suggested that this will drive an overall reduction in prevalence of VAWG crimes and reduced rates of re-offending^[201].

For perpetrators who have been convicted of domestic abuse offences, the National Probation Service and the Prison service use various perpetrator programmes; Building Better Relationships (BBR) and Kaizen. In 2019, the government is conducting an evaluation of these models which will seek to understand the challenges and complexities facing domestic abuse programme evaluations and how these can be overcome^[202].

In West Mercia, information provided locally indicates that there are long waiting lists or waiting times for perpetrators to attend those programmes which are sanctioned through the National Probation Service or Community Rehabilitation Company, which poses further risk to victims and children.

This is echoed by a report issued by the HM Inspectorate of Probation in 2018 which assessed work undertaken by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) in relation to domestic abuse. The report found that there were too few referrals to the programme and that many individuals experienced extensive delays before joining a course, and too many did not complete one^[203].

The report also found a lack of strategic approach with no overall strategy from the Ministry of Justice or HMPPS to drive the quality of CRCs' domestic abuse practice. CRCs manage cases assessed (at sentence) as posing a low or medium risk of harm to others, irrespective of the complexity of these. Most of the perpetrators of domestic abuse who have been convicted of offences such as public order or criminal damage, and many who are serving sentences for assault, will have been assessed as posing a low or medium risk of harm.

As such, they will be managed by CRCs and constitute a substantial part of their business^[204].

In addition to the above, the report stated contractual targets have led to CRCs prioritising process deadlines above good quality and safe practice.

HMPPS has worked hard to provide interventions for use with domestic abuse perpetrators, and to support CRCs in their delivery of these, but needs to take a more strategic and coordinated approach to this work. HMPPS issued an action plan following production of this report, which is reviewed on an annual basis. Other issues in the report noted that some of the CRCs' work to protect victims (and especially children) was of grave concern. There was little correlation between the vision CRCs had for victims and the quality of practice. Many probation workers did not fully understand the effect of domestic abuse on families or the relevance of an integrated approach to managing risk of harm. As such, they focused their work solely on the individual^[205].

The PCC will use his convening powers through the Criminal Justice Board to challenge criminal justice partners to have a robust local response to domestic abuse perpetrators and provision of safeguarding arrangements for victims/survivors and children.

In terms of identifying and assessing the risk of domestic abuse perpetrators, HMPPS^{gg} has developed the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) tool for criminal justice professionals to use to predict the likelihood of domestic violence. The tool is a quality-control checklist that determines the extent to which a professional has assessed risk factors of crucial predictive importance according to clinical and empirical literature and can be used to help determine the degree to which an individual poses a threat to his/her spouse, children, another family member, or another person involved^[206].

Currently in West Mercia, V2 of the tool is being used by the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWMCRC). The Drive Case and Service Managers are due to attend training in November 2019 for V3 of the model, suggested to be an improvement on previous versions, with the inclusion of factors which allow a more dynamic and accurate measure of risk. The Drive team (Worcestershire only) will then pilot the use of V3 with the Drive cohort which will be closely monitored by the central Drive team. **The PCC will continue to have oversight of the implementation of the SARA V3 model and if successful, work with criminal justice partners to share best practice and explore roll-out across West Mercia.**

Domestic Abuse **must** be seen as everyone's business and we **must** work together to support victims and children and disrupt perpetrator behaviour.

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