



South Yorkshire
POLICE

Domestic Abuse Action Plan for South Yorkshire 2019 - 2021

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Foreword



The Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire has set a clear priority to protect vulnerable people. Victims of domestic abuse are by definition vulnerable and as an organisation we will do everything we can to protect them from harm.

This will be achieved by collaborating in effective partnerships, sharing intelligence and ensuring that we take collective action to prevent people from becoming victims. Where people are the victim of crime, we will deliver the highest level of victim led service, seeking at all times to ensure the future safety of that person.

This action plan builds on the force's existing delivery plans and sets out how we will deliver on the recommendations set out in the 2017 HMICFRS report on the police response to domestic abuse. It reflects our determination to be outstanding in this critical area of business.

Tim Forber
Assistant Chief Constable (Crime)

February 2020

Introduction

Domestic abuse is a complex issue and has a significant impact on people's lives. Across South Yorkshire, a report of a domestic incident is made to the police every 19 minutes.

Domestic abuse is a high priority for South Yorkshire Police and we are absolutely committed to providing protection and support for victims in conjunction with our partners, as well as a swift and effective response to all reports of domestic abuse. In order to do this we continue to seek ways of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the service we provide.

The cross-party definition of domestic abuse is:

“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. This can include 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.*

People experience domestic abuse regardless of their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age or disability. It can and does happen to anyone, irrespective of their background or social standing.

Continuous Improvement

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) regularly undertake inspections of Police Force's to identify areas for improvement both Nationally and Locally, this includes particular focus on how force's respond to Domestic Abuse.

Since 2014, four reports have been published by the HMICFRS relating to Domestic Abuse:

- Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse, HMIC, published in 2014.
- Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse, HMIC, published in 2015.
- A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse, HMICFRS, published in 2017
- The police response to domestic abuse, an update report, HMICFRS, published in 2019

Since the initial National Domestic Abuse Report in 2014, South Yorkshire Police have worked tirelessly to address the areas for improvement identified as part of the thematic inspection actions for all forces as well as consolidating any actions from subsequent PEEL inspections.

The current HMICFRS action tracker identifies the following as actions still in progress under the theme of '**thematic inspection actions for all forces**':

Chief Officers in each police force should continue to oversee and ensure full implementation of these action plans and offer regular feedback on progress to their Police and Crime Commissioners. This should be a personal responsibility of the Chief Constable in each case. The leadership task for the service now, is to sustain the level of determination and commitment seen since the publication of 'Everyone's Business' in 2014, to ensure that the police response to victims of domestic abuse continues to improve. HMICFRS will continue to monitor progress against force action plans as part of their PEEL inspection regime.

The force feel this action has been accomplished and evidence has been submitted to HMICFRS for review and signoff.

Every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan, determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report ('Everyone's Business) and specified below, and publish its revised action plan accordingly.

- *Recording.* There is considerable variation between forces in the proportion of recorded crime identified as relating to domestic abuse. Forces need to ensure that domestic abuse crime including coercive control is being correctly identified and recorded.
- *Assessing and responding to risk.* Forces should ensure arrangements for assessing and managing risk are well understood by officers and staff, especially at initial point of contact, and decision making about the grading of, and attendance at, domestic abuse incidents is supervised effectively.
- *Positive and preventative action.* Nationally, arrest rates for domestic abuse are falling, with large variations across forces. There are considerable variations in the use of preventative measures. Forces need monitoring processes, supported by accurate data, to ensure that they are taking positive action such as arrest, and are making effective use of powers, for example Domestic Violence Protection Orders and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme. Where orders or bail conditions are breached, forces need to ensure that there are appropriate robust processes in place to take action.
- *Building the investigative case.* Forces need to ensure that there are clear standards and expectations, with effective supervision, for building the best possible case for the victims of domestic abuse whether victims support police action or not.
- *CPS referrals and prosecutions.* Nationally, referrals and charge rates are falling. Forces need to monitor the data and work closely with the CPS to understand whether improvement is required, and, if so, to effect change.

The force feel this action has been accomplished and evidence has been submitted to HMICFRS for review and signoff.

Chief Constables should review the progress made by their forces in giving full effect to their forces' stated priorities on domestic abuse. Every force in England and Wales should undertake a clear and specific assessment of its own progress in respect of domestic abuse, potentially through peer review, which should include reference to the following:

- the force's updated action plan on domestic abuse;
- the force's performance management framework;
- the force's approach to the use of data and evidence of what works in support of the development of a learning organisation;
- the reward and recognition policy in the force and the roles and behaviours that this rewards currently;
 - the selection and promotion processes in force;
- the messages and communications sent by the senior leadership team to the rest of the force about tackling domestic abuse;
 - the development opportunities for officers and staff in force; and
- the force policy on how perpetrators and victims of domestic abuse who are employed by the force are managed.

Chief constables should, as soon as practicable, take whatever further action is necessary to build on the progress made in giving effect to their forces' stated priorities on domestic abuse. This should include action to raise awareness of domestic abuse to instil a deeper understanding of and commitment to addressing the often complex needs of victims of domestic abuse. Chief Constables should also take steps to support, encourage and conspicuously value officers and staff who exemplify this understanding and commitment.

*Update as of July 2019 – HMICFRS reviewing this action and have requested the DA action plan to be sent. Anticipating signoff in 2020.
Action owner = strategy lead*

Every police force in England and Wales should update its domestic abuse action plan; determine what more it can do to address the areas for further improvement highlighted in this report and specified below; and publish its revised action plan accordingly:

- Understanding and identifying risk;
- Prioritising and allocating domestic abuse investigations;
- Safeguarding victims at medium and standard risk;
- Regularly seeking the views of victims of domestic abuse and acting on this feedback; and
- Consider how best to ensure that officers and staff are able to identify and understand the wide range of violence, behaviours and different perpetrators that fall under the definition of domestic abuse through training, learning and development activities.

Update as of July 2019 – HMICFRS reviewing this action and have requested the DA action plan to be sent. Anticipating signoff in 2020.

Action owner = strategy lead

In addition to the above, the current HMICFRS action tracker identifies the following as actions still in progress under the theme of '**SYP PEEL Priority Actions**':

The force should assess the demand on the public protection unit to ensure there is adequate capacity and capability across the department to efficiently manage investigations. At the same time, the force should ensure that it assesses and addresses the potential impact on other services to the public by moving staff into the 'Protecting Vulnerable People' units.

This action is ongoing; a staffing report is completed by PVP P&G on a monthly basis and distributed to senior officers across the force.

Awaiting review by HMICFRS, anticipated signoff 2020.

Action owner = strategy lead

HMICFRS recommends that the force take immediate steps to ensure that the force improves its investigation of cases involving vulnerable victims. This is particularly relevant to domestic abuse cases, by ensuring that officers and staff with the appropriate professional skills and experience investigate cases, and complex cases in particular, and have the capacity to provide the continuing safeguarding required, and that these investigations are supervised effectively and are recorded appropriately on force systems.

This action is ongoing, work continues with district PVP departments and ViSOR units to tackle the vulnerabilities identified in this action.

Action owner = strategy lead and district departmental heads.

The force should put in place appropriate controls to ensure that where there is a secondary review of domestic abuse cases, and a decision is made to re-grade the risk assessment, a supervisor oversees this decision.

The force feel this action has been accomplished and evidence has been submitted to HMICFRS for review and signoff.

Furthermore, the current HMICFRS action tracker identifies the following as actions still in progress under the theme of '**Crime Data Integrity**':

The force should immediately:

- take steps to identify and address gaps in its systems and processes for identifying and recording all reports of crime related to domestic abuse.

The force feel this action has been accomplished and evidence has been submitted to HMICFRS for review and signoff.

The force should immediately remind all officers and staff working in its 'Protecting Vulnerable People' departments of the requirement to:

- record all crimes initially identified, and those that are disclosed during their investigations, onto the force crime-recording system; and
- correctly apply the crime-recording rules to professional third-party reporting of crimes; and
- develop and implement procedures for the effective supervision of crime-recording decisions made by officers and staff within the Protecting Vulnerable People department.

Update provided in August 2018, action being progressed, PVP P&G to establish overarching review and assessment with departmental heads to ensure accountability.

Lastly, the current HMICFRS action tracker identifies the following as actions still in progress under the theme of '**National Child Protection Inspection**':

We recommend that within three months South Yorkshire Police ensures that officers always record their observations of a child's behaviour in domestic abuse incident records, so that a better understanding of a child's needs can be made.

The force feel this action has been accomplished and evidence has been submitted to HMICFRS for review and signoff.

The above-mentioned actions have been assigned to specialist senior officers who have responsibility for ensuring that the actions are completed at the earliest opportunity. Progress is continuously monitored by Senior Leaders in the organisation and open and continuous dialog is held with HMICFRS Force Liaison Officers.

This continued work will enable South Yorkshire Police to provide a strengthened approach to an issue that is a clear priority for South Yorkshire

Our plans for the future

Leadership and Governance

The Police and Crime Commissioner for South Yorkshire, Dr Alan Billings, has renewed his Police and Crime Plan in 2019 and has maintain his three key priorities for the force, which includes 'protecting vulnerable people'.

Every officer and member of staff working at South Yorkshire Police therefore recognises the importance of providing an efficient, effective response to domestic abuse.

An effective response to domestic abuse also requires the support of partnership agencies, including the local authority, social care, health, support groups, education and many more, with whom the force is committed to working alongside to safeguard victims.

Victims' feedback will also form part of the force's continued review and scrutiny of the services offered, in a bid to ensure that our response is appropriate to the challenges we face.

Initial Contact

When an individual reports an incident of domestic abuse, how that report is handled in the first instance is crucially important. We want victims to have confidence to come forward and report domestic abuse, knowing their call will be handled sensitively and appropriately. Processes are in place to ensure that officers attending incidents of domestic abuse have the information they need to support the victim and respond appropriately to any identified risk.

First Response

South Yorkshire Police is committed to providing an effective initial response to reports of domestic abuse incidents, as we are all too aware that in certain cases, every second counts. The risk assessment training undertaken at our communications centre has also been cascaded to enquiry desk and any frontline staff or officers that may encounter victims of domestic abuse.

We will continue to improve our information sharing and referrals processes with partner agencies to ensure that intelligence about victims and perpetrators is managed appropriately and effectively to safeguard anyone at risk.

The force will continue to work closely with victims and partners to ensure we deliver an excellent service. A lot of attention is given by officers to any children involved in domestic abuse cases, something which is crucially important.

Investigation

South Yorkshire Police have specialist officers trained in the investigation of domestic abuse.

Our officers are trained to collect and preserve evidence, to build the strongest possible case to pursue a prosecution, and we have specialist teams across the county who have access to a range of agencies to provide support and protection for victims and anyone else at risk.

The force has commissioned the delivery of the 'DA Matters' training programme developed by the College of Policing. The programme aims to achieve a 'whole force sustainable approach' to domestic abuse and give a deeper understanding of the impact of coercive and controlling behaviour. It is designed for all officers and staff that encounter DA victims. In SYP, we will train response and neighbourhood officers, local CID and PVP staff, PCSOs, enquiry desk staff, call handlers and despatch staff, custody staff including detention officers along with a proportion of file preparers and witness care officers, HR staff, armed officers, road traffic officers, HQ departments and SCS staff.

The intention is to deliver cultural change and as such, the plan is to deliver to a critical mass of staff (over 2600) in a 6-month period. We will also offer our partners places on the training to develop relationships, understand one another's roles and thereby improve our partnership recognition and approach to supporting domestic abuse victims.

Managing Victims and Offenders

Safeguarding and protecting victims of domestic abuse is our absolute priority in dealing with cases of this nature. We recognise, however, that our plan needs to hold perpetrators of this crime to account and challenge their behaviour while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the victims, giving them the confidence to move on from abusive situations.

Research has shown that some perpetrators can be effectively managed by a range of intervention techniques and with the support of a range of agencies. We are hoping to build on this in the future in collaboration with our partners.

The force has sanctioned the development of a DVPO team who will deal with all DVPN applications across the force and will present a standardised response at court, streamlining the forces use of DVPN as one option to safeguard victims when dealing with domestic abuse crimes.

Learning

South Yorkshire Police is committed to the continuous improvement of its response to domestic abuse. The force continues to learn lessons from previous tragedies within the county and across the country, to build upon its knowledge base and adapt its services in line with national legislation and guidance.

Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage

Honour based abuse and forced marriage incidents often fall within the definition of domestic abuse. South Yorkshire Police will continue to build upon its understanding of this area of domestic abuse and ensure it provides the best possible victim lead service to those affected by HBA or FM.