

DORSET POLICE & CRIME PANEL – 29 SEPTEMBER 2022

DOMESTIC ABUSE

REPORT BY THE POLICY AND COMMISSIONING MANAGER

PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper updates members on the Police and Crime Commissioner's work on domestic abuse.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Government is committed to transforming the response to Domestic Abuse (DA), seen through the introduction of the landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 ('the 2021 Act') and the accompanying [Statutory Guidance](#). The 2021 Act is expected to help millions by strengthening the response across all agencies from the police and courts to local authorities and service providers. It provides further protections for those who experience DA and enhances measures in place to bring perpetrators to justice.
- 1.2 The Statutory Guidance states that "*Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) should consider how they work with other partners to provide an efficient and effective criminal justice system for their local areas including in relation to DA related crime and incidents to support prevention, early intervention, and the provision of services. This may involve bringing partners together through convening and leading forums such as Local Criminal Justice Boards (LCJBs) and some areas will have other partnership boards working alongside or reporting into the LCJBs.*"
- 1.3 The PCC chairs the Dorset Criminal Justice Board (DCJB) and works closely with the Force and other partners to enhance the response provided to victims of DA. The work on DA in Dorset is broad and complex in nature and, through partnership working, agencies support victims, manage crime cases and address perpetrator behaviour.

2. CONTEXT

Definition of Domestic Abuse

- 2.1 DA is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:
- psychological
 - physical
 - sexual
 - financial
 - emotional

Controlling behaviour – 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 – 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.

- 2.2 While DA is not itself a specific criminal offence, criminal offences may be committed by perpetrators. This explains why there is a difference between the number of DA incidents and crimes that are recorded by the police. Related offences could include, but are not limited to: controlling or coercive behaviour, harassment, stalking, criminal damage, physical assault, sexual assault, rape and murder.
- 2.3 DA behaviours result in high harm, high volume incidents which are complex and can leave victims with physical and emotional scars that can last a lifetime. DA has a devastating impact on children and young people. Growing up in a household of fear and intimidation can impact their health, wellbeing, and development, with lasting effects into adulthood.

The Roles of Agencies Dealing with Domestic Abuse

- 2.4 It is estimated that fewer than one in five victims report their abuse to the police – many victims of DA do not come into contact with the criminal justice system. It is therefore important that a wide range of agencies and bodies can identify victims and know how to provide the right response. Early intervention by the voluntary sector and statutory agencies working together can help to protect adults and children from further harm, as well as preventing escalation and recurrence of abuse.
- 2.5 The PCC has included DA as a key theme within his Police and Crime Plan. The PCC is responsible for holding the Chief Constable to account for the exercise of the Chief Constable's functions and the functions of those under the Chief Constable's direction and control. This includes a clear expectation on the police response to manage victims of crime adequately and effectively, including victims of DA crimes / incidents.
- 2.6 An effective response by the criminal justice system is crucial in supporting victims of DA and ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice. The DCJB is chaired by the PCC and is responsible for joining up local criminal justice agencies to achieve common aims and objectives including reducing crime, bringing more offenders to justice, and increasing public confidence. DA is a focus of the DCJB, and the response is closely monitored by the partner members.
- 2.7 In Dorset, there are many agencies working in partnership dealing with DA and providing support to victims. Referral pathways are in place to ensure victims have access to support whether they choose to report the crime to the police or not. A full list of the agencies and roles can be found in the [Home Office Statutory Guidance](#) (Chapter 6, page 78). This list includes agencies within the criminal justice system, councils, housing, education, employment, social care and health. Policing works in partnership with the listed agencies to enable an efficient and effective response to DA.
- 2.8 Operation Encompass is active in Dorset. An information sharing protocol between police and schools is in place so that police can alert designated safeguarding leads of DA incidents involving a child before the start of the next school day so that appropriate action can be taken. It is acknowledged that schools may be the only support these children have, as many are not known to any other services and the DA in their home may well not reach the threshold of intervention by Social Care or other commissioned therapeutic services. Children exposed to DA are victims of a crime and early intervention and a safe and secure nurturing relationship

with at least one individual can disrupt the damage DA causes and can help a child develop resilience and enable healing to take place.

2.9 In Dorset, support is provided for all victims of DA (high, medium, and standard risk DA related crimes):

- **Maple** – co-commissioned by Dorset Police and Dorset OPCC, Maple provides support to high-risk DA victims. The Maple principles are: safety of victims; ensure victims are treated with respect; victims are provided with access to appropriate support provision; and victims are supported to feel empowered and confident throughout the process.
- **Paragon (You Trust) and Bournemouth Churches & Housing Association (BCHA)** – commissioned by the two local authorities in Dorset to provide support services to medium risk DA. (Dorset Council commissioned Paragon and BCP commissioned BCHA). The teams work with women, men, and children who are living with DA. They also offer safe accommodation / refuges to victims who need to escape DA.
- **Victim Support Dorset** – commissioned by Dorset OPCC, Victim Support provides services to standard risk DA. The DA service is provided to all eligible victims irrespective of whether they report the crime to the police or not. Victim Support provides tailored emotional and practical support delivered via a wide range of methods to support victims.

Effective referral pathways between each support provider are in place to ensure that when a risk level changes, victims access services that are most appropriate to their needs. In some cases, the victim stays with the original provider to ensure consistency of service and for the ease of the victim.

2.10 In 2019, the structure of Dorset's local authorities changed and was replaced by two new local authorities: Dorset Council and BCP. Both commission DA support provision and safe accommodation, which are delivered in similar ways. There is, however, some divergence between the local authorities in how Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meetings are arranged.

A MARAC is a meeting where information is shared on the highest risk DA cases between representatives of police, health, child protection, housing practitioners, DAAs, probation and other specialists from the statutory and voluntary sectors. After sharing all relevant information, they have about a victim, the representatives discuss options for increasing the safety of the victim and turn these into a co-ordinated action plan.

In BCP, MARAC sits once a week while in Dorset they have a High-Risk DA (HRDA) meeting four times a week. The support services are very similar but will use this slightly different forum to liaise with and create actions with partners.

The Work of Dorset's Domestic Abuse Advisors

2.11 Domestic Abuse Advisors (DAAs) do the same work as what are commonly referred to as IDVAs and are part of the Maple Team. Maple is accessible to any high-risk victim of DA and the DAAs provide a pro-active support service to victims of DA, to enable victims to manage their safety, keeping them and their children as safe as possible. The service is free to victims across Dorset. All police high-risk cases will be offered DAA high contact support. The eligibility is based purely on risk and not on any other defining characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or financial status.

2.12 The vision of Maple is to ensure that women, men, and children whose lives are affected by DA will receive a high level of support and protection and perpetrators are held accountable

for their actions and behaviour. Maple is the victim focussed rather than investigation focused arm of the Force response to DA and acts as the voice of the victim.

- 2.13 The work of the DAA is distinct in that it assesses the risk a client is in and delivers a service appropriate to the level of risk, as well as identifying risks and taking immediate action to safeguard children, vulnerable adults, and victims of DA. DAAs work within a multi-agency framework to enable all agencies via the MARAC process to contribute towards keeping victims safe.
- 2.14 The DAA works with the victim to develop a safety plan. Safety plans are developed with the victim at the earliest stage in the process possible. This may occur over the telephone during initial contact and in further detail included when they meet face to face. It is the DAA's role to empower the victim to be able to carry out their own actions to improve, increase and ensure their safety and that of any children. Safety plans are living documents and will change regularly based on the victims' risk levels and changing needs.
- 2.15 DAAs keep the victim updated on the progress of their case and carry out referrals to other agencies to enable access to a range of services. DAAs provide support throughout the criminal justice process, including support at the Specialist Domestic Violence Court.

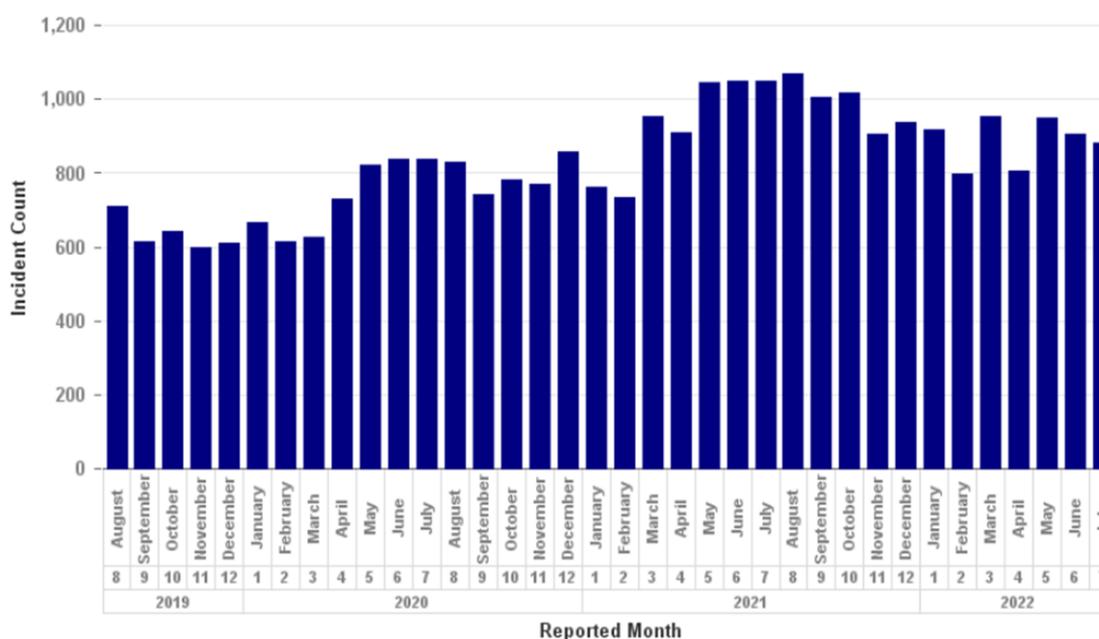
3. CURRENT DOMESTIC ABUSE PERFORMANCE

3.1 The table below shows the number of DA crimes and incidents 2019/20 to 2021/22:

	INCIDENTS	CRIMES
2019/20	7761	9820
2020/21	9654	9523
2021/22	11647	9589

In April to July 2022, there has been 3,542 incidents and 2,959 crimes recorded which is down 14% and 16% respectively compared to the same period in 2021/22.

Not all incidents result in a recordable crime, but the increasing number of incidents place a high demand on policing. The chart below shows the monthly recorded incidents:



- 3.2 The demand for DA support (all risk levels) has been challenging over the last two years due to victims having more complex needs meaning that victims are needing support for longer than has been experienced in previous years. This provides additional pressures on support providers and several factors have led to an increase in demand.
- 3.3 Increased reporting of incidents is likely to be down to a complex range of factors rather than just one reason, including but not limited to:
- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been spending more time at home leading to increased tensions within households.
 - During the COVID-19 restrictions, people in urban areas were more likely to hear disturbances and report them due to being at home more. This trend is likely to be continuing with more people working from home as the norm.
 - People may be experiencing disruption of social and protective networks – they may be going out less due to financial pressures and not accessing their support networks as often as they did. This can lead to increased tensions in the home.
 - COVID-19 had an impact on mental health and even now that impact continues, compounded with other issues that are happening in the world today. This increases household tensions and may be contributing to increases in DA reporting.
 - There may be greater awareness of what constitutes DA and greater awareness of what support is available. There has been a strong focus on DA in the last few years and all agencies have been highlighting what DA is and how victims of DA can access support.
 - There has been greater publicity around Violence Against Women and Girls, which may have encouraged reporting.
 - All frontline staff including force control room staff have received 'DA Matters' training. The College of Policing and the domestic abuse charity SafeLives worked with key stakeholders to develop DA Matters, a bespoke cultural change programme for police officers and staff in England and Wales. It has been designed to transform the response to DA, ensuring the voice of the victim is placed at the centre, and controlling and coercive behaviour is better understood. The programme is designed to have long-term impact: changing and challenging the attitudes, culture and behaviour of the police when responding to DA. This has improved the ability for staff to spot signs of DA, particularly controlling and coercive behaviour.

4. PROGRESS MADE AGAINST THE POLICE AND CRIME PLAN

- 4.1 The PCC and the Chief Constable recognise DA as a priority, and this is reflected in the Police and Crime Plan 2021-29. DA sits within Priority 3 'Fight Violent Crime and High Harm', work is underway and will continue throughout the PCC's term. The following is a brief overview of the work carried out so far:
- As above, the national DA Matters Training has been rolled out across Dorset Police.
 - The Bobby Van now attends some addresses of medium risk DA victims in the BCP area.
 - The PCC provided £80k of funding to You Trust for the Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworker (ISAC), with stalking often DA related. Independent Stalking Conferences have become embedded, so that victims are protected, and this has helped to ensure

that Force Vulnerability Lawyers increase the use of Stalking Prevention Orders. Dorset Police holds monthly stalking clinics.

- A DA Tri Force Action plan, owned by the three Wessex police forces and the CPS, has been instigated. This joint local action plan covers three years and will continue to evolve during that time. It takes the learning from national and regional reviews to embed best practice and it reflects the Government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls review, as well as the Domestic Abuse Strategy. Local leaders are collectively accountable for its delivery. In support of this, Dorset Police has produced a DA Strategy and a 4-point delivery plan.
- A joint communication strategy that encourages victims of domestic abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and stalking to report crimes is being drawn up by Dorset Police through a CPS and Tri-force communications group.
- Dorset OPCC received £200,185 funding to help tackle DA in the county. The OPCC, in partnership with Dorset and BCP councils successfully bid for the funding from the Home Office Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme Fund. The funding was used for projects that help identify perpetrators and implement strategies to address their behaviour and 240 front line professionals across the county to receive specialist training in the Up2U Family Practice Model programme. This programme aims to reduce the incidents of domestic abuse, preventing the cycle of abuse and reducing the numbers of children who require care. It is currently running across Bournemouth, Poole and Weymouth but the additional funding will allow it to expand into Christchurch and will also increase the number of people who can be supported through the scheme.
- The DRIVE programme pilot is in place and a bid has been put forward to extend for a further year.
- Partner agencies continue to support CARA (Conditional Caution and Relationship Abuse) – this is a Domestic Abuse diversion and is mandatory for all male offenders who have committed an intimate DA offence and have been issued with a Conditional Caution.
- The PCC, as Chair of the Dorset Criminal Justice Board, has requested further analysis regarding the rates of victim attrition throughout the criminal justice process, as undertaken by the Victims and Witnesses subgroup.
- Funding has been made available for a SmartWater deterrent for DA victims. SmartWater 'home protection packs' enable the victim to forensically mark items in their home, as well as the external environment, deterring offenders from the property and providing trace evidence should they still choose to enter. 200 packs will be purchased, to be deployed over the 12 months trial.
- Dorset OPCC is a member of the Domestic Abuse Forum which meets quarterly and also a member of the newly formed IDVA/DAA engagement forum that meets quarterly.

5. PCC SCRUTINY OF THE DORSET DAA PROVISION

- 5.1 Maple continues to provide an effective service to victims of high-risk DA. Since the pandemic this has been challenging due to the volumes and the complex needs of victims, but Maple has continued to ensure the principles are met.
- 5.2 In 2020, the national charity SafeLives carried out an independent review of the current Dorset Police high-risk DA service provision and several recommendations were made. Immediate steps were taken with regards to some of the recommendations, but others required significant changes to the current operating model. SafeLives recommended that consideration should

be given to whether Maple should be independent and hosted by a third sector service rather than the police.

5.3 Maple is currently under review to assess the feasibility of increasing the independence of the service whilst maintaining the high levels of engagement, and service currently being delivered. The review aims to ensure that the service is efficient and value for money. Support provision to high-risk DA victims is a complex process and one which interlinks with a range of different partners/agencies. The Maple review project aims to:

- Enhance the level of service provided to DA survivors while providing a value for money service.
- Assess the level and quality of service provision of independent third-party sector organisations to deliver the Maple Team function and support to DA survivors.
- Assess the costs to Dorset Police of transferring to a third-party provider.

The project team has scheduled meetings with the OPCC to ensure the OPCC are consulted on any proposed alterations or improvements of the existing service provision.

6. NEXT STEPS AND CHALLENGES

6.1 The next stage of Op Encompass will be rolled out imminently. Op Encompass 2 broadens the support to early learning placements such as nurseries and childcare to secure better outcomes for children who are subject or witness to police-attended incidents of domestic abuse. Provision of support within the school/early years environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

6.2 Dorset OPCC is working closely with partners to continue to develop 'a whole systems approach to domestic abuse'. This relates primarily to where statutory agencies commission services, but also facilitates commissioning activity that is created through other funding streams, for example Government grants. The whole systems approach requires working together to co-design our local domestic abuse services, in partnership with our communities, and looking at co-commissioning opportunities across the pan Dorset area.

6.3 We can anticipate that as the cost-of-living crisis takes affect that there will be further increases in DA reporting as financial pressures mount within households. This presents support agencies with significant challenges with an increase in workload that is already apparent due to victims having more complex needs and victims requiring support for longer than has been experienced in previous years. Through a partnership approach this is being closely monitored.

6.4 The cost-of-living crisis and in particular the increased energy and fuels prices, will mean that support agency provision will cost more than it has done previously. Ultimately, it is likely that this will need to be addressed by an increase in financial provision and will be carefully considered by the PCC as part of the budget setting process.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Members are asked to note the report.

DESNEY RENDLE
POLICY AND COMMISSIONING MANAGER

Members' Enquiries to: Adam Harrold, Director of Operations (01202) 229084

Media Enquiries to: Susan Bloss, Head of Communications & Engagement (01202) 229095