

Measures to reduce violence against women and girls

Proactive approach involving use of civil orders, dedicated violence against women and girls (VAWG) officers and perpetrator data proactive referrals.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Reoffending
Topic	Crime prevention Criminal justice Offender management Violence against women and girls
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Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Health services
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Adults Offenders Victims

Aim

This initiative aims to:

- protect and prevent violence against women and girls, by proactively targeting those who seek to cause violence, intimidate and or harass
- reassure, protect and encourage the reporting of crime from within vulnerable and seldom heard communities

Intended outcome

This initiative intends to:

- improve victim satisfaction
- improve charge volume
- improve charge to conviction ratios
- improved management of perpetrators

Description

This initiative involved:

Perpetrator intervention programme

Commissioning perpetrator interventions involving intelligence lead proactive targeting of perpetrators. Perpetrator intervention programme is a force wide capability from the single provider, Cranstoun and was supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner funds.

Selected perpetrator intervention programme is referred to as the Drive project, provided by Cranstoun. The Drive project is a 24-week programme that works with high-harm, high risk and serial perpetrators of domestic abuse to prevent their abusive behaviour and protect victims. It has been embedded in the south of the force since 2018 for high-risk perpetrators and it is anticipated that from September, it will include standard and medium risk perpetrators through Cranstoun's male and masculinities programme.

The police referral following identification is often through the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) or multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) governance at high risk. Then standard and medium risk will link in with the Prevent programme and provide new opportunities with regards to outcomes, with the use of outcome 22 (Diversion).

Cranstoun have been successful in their bid within a recent commissioning process, to provide the same level of service and programme in the north of the force. This will include all risk levels from the start. The VAWG officers support the process in making proactive approaches and influencing candidates for the programme, utilising the high harm data that is produced.

Domestic perpetrator programme

West Mercia Police now have force coverage in terms of a domestic abuse (DA) perpetrator programme. The project sits under the MARAC governance regarding high risk. Suitable candidates are identified and referred into the domestic abuse perpetrator programme (DAPP) for consideration on to the Drive project. The local policing areas (LPAs), policing vulnerable people (PVP) and detective inspectors (DIs) manage this process.

In terms of the standard and medium interventions, these are being managed under the male and masculinities Cranstoun programme and these will be supported by the prevent/problem solving structures, including West Mercia Police statutory performance indicator data sets.

High risk perpetrators

Police referral for high-risk perpetrators following identification is often through MARAC or MAPPA governance, for high risk or via the prevent/problem solving hubs for standard and medium. Perpetrators considered for the standard or medium risk link in with the Prevent programme, provide new opportunities to outcomes, such as the use of outcome 22 (diversion – action taken by another body/agency), as opposed to outcome 15 (evidential difficulties, victim supporting further action) or 16 (evidential difficulties, victim not supporting further action).

Stalking protection orders

Significant increase in the volume of stalking protection orders (SPOs) issued by West Mercia Police. This has been made possible by investing in a high harm co-ordinator to service all sexual and stalking civil orders. West Mercia Police are trialling the use of VAWG officers to support the high harm co-ordinator in the application of civil orders, in particular SPOs with the aim of an increase of applications due to the additional resilience and support offered.

SPOs are managed within integrated offender management under a robust management framework where a high harm co-ordinator processes all SPOs for the force. This dedicated point of contact has ensured focus and traction with applications. This is also supported by VAWG officers (one per local policing area), who conduct a daily review for domestic violence protection notices (DVPN)/stalking protection order (SPO) opportunities. They also identify and apply for orders in their respective orders.

High harm co-ordinators and VAWG officers both sit within a central strategic vulnerability and safeguarding department to ensure that a consistent approach is maintained across the organisation, as both roles are within the same command structure. West Mercia Police have implemented a force-wide stalking and harassment 5-stage process that provides greater scrutiny and focus on the offence:

1. Upon recognition, the officer in case (OIC) has a conversation with sergeant
2. Sergeant flags to duty inspector
3. Initial review of offender and other offences conducted
4. Raise during the daily management meeting (DMM) for review of resources
5. Opportunity for further detective inspector review considering multiple investigations and specialist trained officer in charge of the investigation.
6. SPO and domestic violence disclosure scheme made obligatory consideration at the earliest stage with greater scrutiny, as well as early identification of stalking. Once a case is identified the process adds focus and appropriate allocation and management of investigation.

Violence against women and girls officers

Placement of VAWG officers within local policing areas as mentioned above. There are five female VAWG officers, one per LPA across the five LPAs in West Mercia Police. They tackle three pillars of the VAWG action plan (building trust and confidence, pursuit of perpetrators and safe spaces).

Each action is assigned to an appropriate action holder. The action plan will identify what is referred to as 'Steps to Green' (e.g. the force's aim that once achieved mark the action as complete). The VAWG action plan and pillars are tackled through a variety of departmental support, including operations and communication centres, criminal justice, professional standards department, to name a few, all with the sole aim of tackling VAWG. The VAWG officers, with their initiatives and regular community engagement is integral to tackling VAWG.

National Action Plan

Improvements of management of rape and serious sexual offences cases in line with National Action Plan and Operation Soteria.

Overall impact

Impact is being monitored by the force. This involves:

- stalking protection order data being collated centrally and managed on Athena (software to help police forces keep their communities safer)
- problem profile and crime audit review
- review of collated data to identify service improvements and targeted intervention
- increase in stalking protection orders and the reporting of stalking behaviours
- increase in positive outcomes as a consequence of VAWG officer interventions

Learning

Funding is often a challenge. However, a number of VAWG initiatives have been considered as part of the Home Office funding within Safer Streets Round 5. Due to the geographical size of the force, recruitment of VAWG officers was an initial challenge, however, this has since been overcome.

Defining the VAWG officers' role profile and having them aligned to a central function is essential, otherwise they could easily be absorbed into LPA demand and preferred staffing level requirements.

Best available evidence

Currently, the [Crime Reduction Toolkit](#) does not include best-available evidence on some of the aspects of this practice example but it does include the best-available evidence on [motivational](#)

[interviewing](#) to support behaviour change with domestic abuse perpetrators.

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