

Forensic marking for domestic abuse

Evaluating the effectiveness of a forensic marking intervention for domestic abuse, aiming to prevent repeated unwanted contact and support detection of crimes.

Key details

Lead institution	College of Policing
Principal researcher(s)	Dr Rosie Erol rosie.erol@college.police.uk
Police region	West Midlands
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham University • Durham Constabulary • Hampshire Constabulary • Kent Police • Staffordshire Police • West Yorkshire Police
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	October 2023
Date due for completion	March 2025

Research context

This project is one of three interventions currently being evaluated by the College which aim to reduce violence against women and girls. The other two are [police in classrooms supporting the PSHE curriculum](#), and video responses to domestic abuse.

Forensic marking for domestic abuse

The forensic marking intervention for domestic abuse aims to use forensic marking products to prevent repeated unwanted contact and support detection of crimes. Domestic abuse victims are provided with a forensic marking kit which when deployed, can forensically mark a perpetrator and provide evidence that they have been present at a specific location, or in close proximity to the victim. The perpetrator is contacted by the police to inform them of the intervention with the aim of deterring them from approaching the victim and preventing further victimisation. The objectives of the intervention are:

- to reduce the number of repeat domestic abuse incidents
- to improve satisfaction and trust in policing for domestic abuse victims
- to improve the feelings of safety and freedom for victims
- to increase the number of repeat perpetrators being brought to justice

Research methodology

This project will evaluate whether the use of forensic marking products is effective in providing reassurance to victims of domestic abuse and deterring perpetrators from reoffending. The evaluation will cover both process and outcome elements, incorporating a range of research methods. The intervention is being implemented in five police forces:

- Durham Constabulary
- Hampshire Constabulary
- Kent Police
- Staffordshire Police
- West Yorkshire Police

A multi-site quasi-experimental matched pairs research design is proposed for the impact evaluation of the intervention. Victims receiving the intervention will be matched to victims who have not received the intervention from within the same force. The intervention cases will be matched with comparison cases from police data on a number of criteria, including sex risk assessment level and details of previous incidents.

Data will be collected using a variety of methods, including a survey of victims, interviews with victims and analysis of police recorded crime/incident data and outcome data.

A process evaluation will be undertaken to understand how the intervention was implemented in each force in practice. This will explore how victims are identified as being suitable for the intervention, the process for deciding which products are most appropriate, and the process for informing perpetrators. It will look at how this intervention fits in with other support provided to the victim, including the use of protection orders. It will also look to understand how acceptable this intervention is to victims and other stakeholders and identify any barriers and facilitators that influence how the intervention is put into practice.

The process evaluation will include analysis of project monitoring data in each force, along with observations and interviews with officers, staff and other stakeholders.

Additional resources

- [Police in classrooms supporting the PSHE curriculum](https://production.copweb.aws.college.police.uk/research/projects/forensic-marking-domestic-abuse)