

Evaluation of video first response (VFR) to non-emergency domestic abuse calls for service

A randomised controlled trial and quasi-experimental trial assessing the impact of the initial police response to non-emergency domestic abuse calls for service being delivered via video conferencing software.

Key details

Status	Ongoing
Lead institution	College of Policing
Principal researcher(s)	Ella White, Abbie Foulger and Sarah Colover ella.white@college.police.uk
Police region	West Midlands
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crest Advisory • West Midlands Police • West Yorkshire Police • An independent telephone survey company
Level of research	Professional/work based
Project start date	April 2024
Date due for completion	March 2025

Research context

This project is one of three interventions currently being evaluated by the College of Policing which aim to reduce violence against women and girls. The other two are [forensic marking for domestic](#)

[abuse](#) and [police officers in the classroom supporting the PSHE curriculum](#).

Video first response to domestic abuse calls for service

Video first response (VFR) is the use of video conferencing to provide the initial police response to eligible non-emergency domestic abuse calls for service. During the video calls, the VFR officer can collect evidence, create safeguarding referrals, conduct risk assessments and take MG11 and victim personal statements.

There are two models of VFR included in this research:

- rapid video response (RVR) where the victim is connected almost instantaneously with the officer following their call for service
- scheduled video response (SVR) where an appointment is made for the officer to conduct the initial response at a time convenient to both the victim and officer

A [previous randomised controlled trial of RVR by Kent Police](#) reported promising findings, including improved victim satisfaction among female victims of intimate partner violence.

This research aims to build on the Kent Police study to develop a greater understanding of the impact of VFR in different police forces and using different delivery models.

Hypothesis

The research aims to answer the following overarching research questions:

- Are domestic abuse victims more likely to be satisfied if they receive a first police response via video?
- Do domestic abuse victims disclose more during the first police response if it is done via video?
- How does a video response impact on domestic abuse victims' feelings of safety?
- Does use of video response to domestic abuse victims improve police efficiency?
- What is the impact of video response to domestic abuse on perceptions of police effectiveness?

Geographical area

West Midlands Police and West Yorkshire Police force areas

Target sample size

- West Midlands Police: 1,450 cases (450 in control group, 450 in RVR treatment group, 450 in SVR treatment group)
- West Yorkshire Police: 784 cases (392 in comparison group, 392 in treatment group)

Participants - inclusion criteria

The participants in this trial will consist of victims of domestic abuse who have qualified for VFR, based on their force's eligibility criteria. For example, eligible cases must be reported by a victim who is aged 18 or above and has access to an internet-enabled device. Forces also use the THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability, engagement) and 4Cs criteria (consent, safety conserved, cannot be recipient of counter allegations, can communicate well) to assess suitability.

Interventions

The treatment group will receive a video initial police response, via RVR or SVR. The control group will receive the 'business as usual' approach, either responded to in-person or via telephone.

Study design

Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation in West Midlands Police is a randomised controlled trial, where eligible cases are randomised at the point of call for service into the treatment or control groups. If a case is not eligible for RVR (due to either police capacity or victim preference), the victim will be offered SVR and this case will be matched to the randomised cohorts.

The impact evaluation in West Yorkshire Police is a quasi-experimental design, whereby RVR has been rolled out in two of the five force districts. These VFR cases will be matched to cases in the three business as usual districts during analysis.

In both forces, we will be analysing results from a telephone survey with victims, police system data and a case file review.

Process evaluation

A process evaluation is being conducted alongside the impact evaluations in both trial forces, consisting of observations of the VFR process and interviews with officers and staff from the VFR teams, contact centre, secondary investigation team, domestic abuse support services and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Qualitative work with stakeholders and non-trial forces

To capture wider views on VFR outside of the trial forces, Crest Advisory conducted 58 qualitative interviews with participants from across six police forces, domestic abuse services and national stakeholders.

Outcome measures

Within the research questions listed above, the primary outcomes are:

- victims' feelings of safety
- victims' feelings that the police took their needs into account
- victims' feelings that the police listened to them
- victims' satisfaction with the initial police response they received
- time between victims' calls for service and initial police response
- number of crimes recorded during initial response
- number of safeguarding referrals made during initial response
- completeness of risk assessments

Additional resources

- [Forensic marking for domestic abuse](#)
- [Police officers in the classroom supporting the PSHE curriculum](#)

Tags

- [Domestic violence](#)
- [Violence against women and girls](#)