

Police perpetrated domestic abuse: Exploring the narratives of victim/survivors and police investigators

A qualitative project exploring narratives of victim/survivors and police investigators of police perpetrated domestic abuse, examining topics such as reporting, investigating and police culture.

Key details

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Police region	North West
Collaboration and partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BetterLives • Centre for Women's Justice
Level of research	PhD
Project start date	October 2022
Date due for completion	April 2026

Research context

In March 2020 the [Centre for Women's Justice](#) (CWJ) submitted a super-complaint which alleged police forces in England and Wales were inadequately responding to allegations of police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA). The CWJ presented [11 overarching concerns](#) including failures in investigations and improper responses to complaints. Although research on PPDA is sparse, studies have found that 40% of officers self-reported being physically violent towards their spouses (Johnson 1991; Neidig, Russell and Seng 1992). Building from the evidence in the super-

complaint and previous literature, this research explores the victim/survivor and police investigator narratives of the reporting processes and investigations of PPDA, and whether police culture impacts on those experiences.

The aim of this research is to gain an insight into current reporting, investigation and victim support in cases of PPDA. It explores the narratives of both victim/survivors and police investigators of PPDA to gain an understanding of the reporting process, investigation process and whether police culture impacts the investigation or victim/survivor.

Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the current issues and debates surrounding PPDA and the consequences of PPDA.
- Examine and analyse all policies and procedures that are currently in place to investigate PPDA through freedom of information requests and semi-structured interviews.
- Explore through semi-structured interviews the narratives and experiences of victims/survivors and police investigators of PPDA.
- Explore the investigators and victims experience of the investigation process.
- Explore the victims experience of the reporting process and discuss with investigators whether any new guidance is in place for reports of PPDA.
- Enquire whether investigators of PPDA have experienced any challenges throughout their investigation.
- Explore current perceptions of police culture and the impact it may have on investigations of PPDA.
- Examine the support in place for victim/survivors and how that was experienced.

Research methodology

This project will involve 3–5 police forces in England and Wales and 11 victim/survivors of PPDA.

Combining a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, it will involve the following:

- A submission of a Freedom of Information Request to all forces in England and Wales, containing 18 questions including on prevalence, victim/survivor support, training and changes to policy and processes.

- 11 in-depth semi-structured interviews with victims/survivors of PPDA, some of whom are police officers/staff themselves.
- 10–15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with police investigators who have investigated PPDA, either misconduct or criminal.
- Ethnographic observation of training of officers and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) on the subject of PPDA and domestic abuse.

Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed manually. A reflexive thematic analysis will be used to analyse the interview data allowing for the researcher's subjectivity to be utilised in the production of knowledge.

References

Johnson LB. (1991). 'On the front lines: Police stress and family well-being.' Hearing before the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, House of Representatives: 102 Congress First Session May 20 (pp 32–48). Washington DC: US Government Printing Office.

Neidig PH, Russell HJE and Seng AF. (1992). 'Interspousal aggression in law enforcement families: A preliminary investigation'. *Police Stud.: Int'l Rev. Police Dev.*, 15, 30.

Research participation

Police forces and victims/survivors who would like to participate in the study are invited to email the researcher at Lwilliams33@uclan.ac.uk.