

Operation Diogel – supporting domestic abuse victims

Deploying specially trained investigators to visit domestic abuse victims who are unsupportive of a prosecution.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Independently evaluated
Purpose	Reoffending
Topic	Violence against women and girls Domestic abuse Criminal justice
Organisation	South Wales Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of South Wales Police
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Region	Wales
Partners	Police Voluntary/not for profit organisation

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is at a pilot stage.
Start date	January 2023
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Victims

Aim

The aims of Operation Diogel are to:

- establish contact with victims of domestic abuse
- provide a multi-agency approach to support victims
- build rapport with victims

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are to:

- increase the number victim-led outcomes
- reduce the number of repeat domestic abuse victims
- improve confidence in the police

Description

In January 2023, Cardiff, and the Vale Basic Command Unit (BCU) launched Operation Diogel which established a dedicated team of specially trained domestic abuse officers to support victims. Any officer within the force or partner organisation can refer a victim to Operation Diogel.

The purpose of the team is to work on cases from the prisoner process team where the victim is reluctant to support a prosecution and the perpetrator is held in custody. During the visit(s) the

officers engage with victims to make them aware of the support available and establish a prosecution plan.

Operation Diogel team

The team consists of one supervising sergeant and six police constables (PCs) who conduct the visits. The six PCs were sourced from other teams and the sergeant role was specifically created for Operation Diogel.

The team underwent the following training:

- internal domestic abuse matters training
- external training done by Women's Aid
- professionalising investigations programme (PIP) tier 2 witness training

The PCs have more allotted time allocated to spend with victims in comparison to response officers. To ensure that the PCs can fully support the victims, they are not required to answer radio calls during this time. In addition, the PCs dress in plain clothes and use unmarked police cars to optimise rapport building with the victims.

Partner agencies

Operation Diogel is supported by [Women's Aid](#) and the [Vale Domestic Abuse Services](#) who can make joint visits with the PCs.

Evaluation

An evaluation, led by Cardiff University, was conducted in summer 2023.

The evaluation methods were:

- focus groups with officers
- focus groups with Women's Aid and the Vale Domestic Abuse Services
- victim feedback surveys
- changes in positive outcome rates (defined as investigations that charges/summons, alternative charges, and community resolutions)

Evaluation findings

According to the evaluation, the intervention appears to have had a positive impact. In contrast with operational officers, the Operation Diogel team delivered various outcomes.

- There was a statistically significant increase in the number of cases resulting in a positive outcome such as charged/summonsed or cautioned.
- There was a 9.7% increase in positive outcomes compared to non-Operation Diogel domestic abuse crime.
- Analysis revealed that the team had more positive outcomes with repeat victims who had 10 or more reports, and those who were deemed to be at higher risk.

Insight data demonstrated that victims visited by the Operation Diogel team were more likely to report being 'completely satisfied' at every stage of the police response.

Overall impact

According to the force and partner agencies, Operation Diogel has provided numerous benefits.

- PCs had more time to focus their attention on cases.
- PCs developed their skills of sharing expertise and working as a team with the continuity of the sergeant.
- It offered the opportunity for a more flexible process to suit victims' individual needs. This was achieved through the officer's ability to spend more time with the victims, understanding their circumstances, keeping in contact, and liaising with partner agencies.
- While there was an agreed aim to reduce the number of cases that result in 'no further action, it was acknowledged that it is the victim's decision.
- Improved communication was established with partner agencies which has enabled joint working to increase the number of victims accessing support. As a result, partner agencies have started referring victims to Operation Diogel.

The team have provided positive feedback on the running of the operation. Operation Diogel volunteers have reported feeling that they are able to make a real difference, build a rapport with the victim, and see positive outcomes.

Learning

- It is essential that supervisors are supportive of the process to ensure successful implementation.
- It was important to stress to colleagues that Operation Diogel is intended to support victims who were not supportive of a prosecution. It does not replace initial officer attendance and interaction with domestic abuse victims. Responding officers should try to connect with the victims on their initial visit.
- The team can establish good relationships with the partner agencies. They were able to do so by inviting partner agencies into the force, having regular face-to-face meeting and joint visits.
- When recruiting officers from other units, it is important to establish expectations for how long staff will be seconded for, and whether their role will need to be replaced.
- Investigators within the force must now apply when there is a vacancy in Operation Diogel, as opposed to being seconded from another department. This has helped ensure that officers working for Operation Diogel are passionate about the aims and mission.
- Buy-in from stakeholders was simple to gain within the South Wales as domestic abuse is a force priority.

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Tags

Domestic abuse Domestic violence Violence against women and girls