

4P approach to safeguarding victims of domestic abuse

Using the 4P approach to safeguarding medium-risk domestic abuse (DA) victims.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Evaluated locally
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Violence against women and girls Domestic abuse
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Region	Wales
Partners	Police Community safety partnership Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2024
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Offenders Victims Women
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Aim

This initiative aims to:

- identify immediate and long-term safeguarding issues faced by medium-risk victims of DA
- identify undisclosed offending
- identify links with stakeholders to support organisational learning, embed safeguarding activity at a tactical level and share lessons about what works
- provide neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs) with training on effective risk management and signposting for the victims

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of this initiative are to:

- increase the number of medium-risk DA victims being referred to support services
- increase victim's confidence and trust in the police
- increase the number of and detail of disclosures given by DA victims to police
- increase the number of DA victims who are risk assessed

Description

The 4Ps approach used to tackle OCGs has been adapted to tackle other crime types. Domestic abuse (DA) is a force-wide and nationwide priority, and the force decided to pilot the usage of the 4Ps to tackle DA.

The force decided that the NPT were being underused and had capacity to take on more responsibilities. The NPT needed to become as familiar with DA victims and perpetrators within their basic command unit (BCU) as they are with burglars and shop keepers.

Medium-risk DA victims are the most at risk of domestic homicides as they do not receive the same wraparound support as high risk victims. This means their vulnerabilities and opportunities for additional disclosures are overlooked. Medium-risk DA victims were the target for this initiative.

This initiative was piloted within the Carmarthenshire BCU from January 2024 and was rolled out force-wide in November 2024.

Police community support officers (PCSOs) from the NPT use the 4P principles set out below:

Prepare

The 'prepare' stage of the intervention is initiated once a medium-risk DA victim has been identified. The PCSO will conduct a risk assessment using the police systems to determine whether it is safe to attend in person or whether a phone call should be used to make contact instead. This normally depends on whether the victim lives with the perpetrator. The victim is contacted 36-48 hours after reporting the incident once a secondary risk assessment has been completed and their medium-risk grade confirmed. A minimum of three contacts is attempted, as victims may be unable or unwilling to speak to the police straight away.

Protect

The 'protect' phase relates to additional safeguarding that NPT officers can put in place for the victim. If officers meet with victims in person, body-worn video can help to achieve best evidence if further disclosures are made. PCSOs will also offer a range of support services referrals to victims depending on their needs, aiming to take a holistic approach that addresses their unique vulnerabilities. Services include:

- Alcohol referral
- Drug referral
- Submission of a public protection notice (PPN)
- Re-assurance visit
- Housing referral
- Crime prevention visit
- Domestic violence kit issued
- Fire referral
- Refuge referral

- Marker placed on address
- Domestic violence alarm
- Referred children to INTACT (multi-agency partnership programme to tackle Serious Violence and Organised Crime in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys)
- Food bank referral
- Safety plan provided

Prevent

Under the 'prevent' element, officers explore a range of measures that can be put in place to prevent further offending against the victim:

- bail checks
- domestic violence protection notice checks
- disruption visits
- high visibility patrols around the area

These measures aim to deter further offending and are based on what is most suitable to the victim.

Pursue

In the 'pursue' phase officers put steps in place to pursue the offender and bring them to justice. For example, if further offences are disclosed it could mean further arrests, and if an offender is not at the address they are put on a 'hot list' of high-priority arrests that need to be made (Operation Manatee).

Every victim receives a 10-day follow-up visit to reassess need and risk and follow-up on any outstanding issues and concerns. This is also an opportunity for officers to attempt to undertake a risk assessment if this was declined on initial contact. The follow-up visit helps to build trust with the most vulnerable victims and can often result in a more detailed disclosure of abuse.

Record keeping

Once the PCSO has engaged with the victim they record the safeguarding activity and actions taken/further offences disclosed on the relevant crime occurrence under the safeguarding general notes tab on the NICHE records management system. This ensures the information is

democratised so that the investigating officer and the force's vulnerability hub can see it. This informs their decision making.

All information regarding victim interaction under the 4Ps is recorded on a dedicated Microsoft form on a Teams channel. This creates records for each case detailing what steps the PCSO took during the visit and making it easy to keep track of what support victims have received.

Resourcing

Resourcing is utilised from within existing BCU NPTs at zero cost operationally. Domestic violent kits are funded by the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) office, cost unknown but minimal.

Consultation and feedback

The detective superintendent serving as head of protecting vulnerable people and the detective chief inspector in the force's vulnerability hub were both consulted on how best to deliver the initiative. They recommended waiting to contact victims until the secondary risk assessment had been completed and the risk grading was certain.

A month or so in, once the force had proof of concept, they also contacted a range of local support services, the victim's forum and the Independent Advisory Group (IAG) to inform them of the initiative and gain their support.

Information on how the victims feel they are treated by the NPT, and any recommendations they make about the service, are also captured to bolster public trust and confidence in the system. This is done by the PCSOs asking for verbal feedback from the victim at the end of their visit.

Weekly NPT supervisor meetings have also been arranged to ensure the MS form is being completed by all officers. Supervisors dip sample these forms to quality check them. These meetings also serve as a way to address any issues, provide feedback and celebrate successes.

Training

All PCSOs receive training on safeguarding, DA and stalking and harassment when they first join the NPT. As it's a high-churn department, most PCSOs had received this training recently, however a refresher was given to those who needed it.

The NPT also had an input from a local DA support service talking to them about what signs to look out for that a person is being abused and how best to approach DA victims. Additionally, an input was provided by a vulnerability trainer on how to identify victim's vulnerabilities and address them correctly.

Evaluation

An evaluation was carried out by the force which examined the pilot in Carmarthenshire BCU between January and October 2024 using quantitative and qualitative data from the spreadsheet used to keep track of the initiative.

Findings

The evaluation showed that between the 22 January and the 31 October there has been a total of 711 medium-risk DA incidents recorded within Carmarthenshire. Of the 711 victims, 601 received a domestic abuse, stalking, harassment and honour-based violence assessment (DASH), 72 were recorded as refused, and no data was held for 38 incidents.

There were 268 repeat victims within a 30-day period, a 90-day period and a 180-day period who received the intervention. Assault, stalking/harassment and other violence and verbal threats were the most voluminous offences recorded.

Victims who accepted the intervention were all offered additional safeguarding, support and referrals to DA services, third sector and other charities that had previously been declined or not offered during the initial incident attended to by response officers.

The outcomes of contact were:

- 312 had a telephone conversation
- 56 were met at their home address
- 50 refused to engage
- 32 didn't reply after three attempts at contact were made
- 20 weren't contacted as it was deemed inappropriate
- eight were met at another location
- six had a meeting arranged
- one wasn't contacted as they were re-graded to high risk

21 incidents involving children were recorded. During their contact with NPT the children were offered a referral to INTACT but all declined.

138 victims received additional safeguarding as a result of the pilot in total:

- 65 victims asked for a reassurance phone call
- 34 victims were issued a DV kit
- 20 victims received a threshold referral
- nine victims received a reassurance visit
- four victims asked for a PPN to be submitted
- two victims received a threshold visit

High visibility patrols are being conducted for 65 victims, DVPN/DVPO checks conducted for two victims and bail checks conducted for four victims.

During NPT contact, two victims disclosed further offences and a STORM message was created.

Breach of bail was identified for one crime. 10 suspects have been placed on operation manatee, and at the time of writing three suspects have been arrested following operation manatee patrols.

Feedback from victims

From May 2024 victims were asked questions about their feelings towards this follow up safeguarding they were asked:

- was it of benefit?
- any recommendations?
- did the follow-up make them feel safe and cared for?
- how can we improve?

Officers have received feedback from 274 victims in relation to the above questions.

- 110 victims confirmed they were grateful for the contact from NPT officers but did not require additional support. One victim stated that it was very beneficial and suggested this continues for further victims.
- 30 victims confirmed they would like additional support and referrals were made for Threshold, MIND, Jac Lewis Foundation, Calan DVS and Goleudy. Crime prevention advice and DV kits were

also provided to 12 victims.

- Three additional PPNs were submitted for additional safeguarding.
- 16 victims were again grateful for the reassurance phone call from NPT, but confirmed they were already receiving additional support from external agencies.
- 53 victims did not want further support and did not wish to speak or engage with the Police

All victims were given their case incident number so they could contact the police at a later date and provided with contact details for a range of support agencies.

Conclusions and recommendations

It was concluded that medium-risk domestic abuse victims would benefit from this work if it was rolled out across all Local Policing Areas within Dyfed Powys Police as a result of this data.

The PCCs office is keen for a force-wide evaluation to be carried out, supported by an academic institution.

Overall impact

This initiative has now been rolled out force wide and adopted by NPTs as best practice. NPTs have reported they find the work rewarding and feel that it's valuable.

The DA commissioner published a criminal justice report 'Shifting the Scales' in which the Dyfed-Powys initiative appears in the 'Good practice and impact of positive first interaction' section as a case study.

Medium-risk victims are more engaged and those that don't require a referral state unequivocally that the service must continue for those that need further safeguarding and support. The process has been adopted force wide and is being presented to the other three Welsh forces for possible adoption. The DA Commissioners office fully support it and say they haven't seen this approach in any other force. In their words, some forces aren't providing this level of service to high-risk victims. Victim satisfaction is high and domestic abuse support services are reporting increased volumes of referrals as the force gets victims over the threshold and into their offices where tailored support is provided.

The initiative has filled a gap where medium-risk victims who could move into the high-risk area are now better supported. The regional violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

(VAWDASV) coordinator has stated it also fills some primary care gaps as victims are getting support for issues that would otherwise have gone unaddressed.

Learning

- The process is simple and positively impacts on a large volume of medium-risk DA victims.
- An event was held to announce the initiative to the NPT. From this event they could collect feedback about what support NPTs needed to deliver the initiative, for example confidence building on dealing with DA cases.
- The force briefed Unison on the initiative after staff raised concerns as to whether the initiative fit within their role. In the future, Unison and other trade unions and staff associations should be informed early on about initiatives which impact on the roles officers and staff carry out.
- There should also be clarity on what training will be received by officers, so they can feel confident in dealing with DA cases and victims.
- The force would recommend other forces use a Microsoft form to keep records which worked more effectively than a spreadsheet. It's also important to ensure the force's records management system has space to include the safeguarding activities that have been undertaken so this information is democratised.

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