

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

The summary report of the evaluation of video first response to non-emergency domestic abuse calls.

First published 3 September 2025

Non-emergency domestic abuse calls represent a substantial proportion of 999 calls for service and are often responded to with significant delay when an in-person response is required. Emerging evidence from single-force evaluations of both telephone and video response indicate potential benefits of adopting a virtual approach using video first response (VFR).

VFR is a virtual police response to eligible non-emergency domestic abuse calls for service that uses video conferencing software. Eligible calls for service are transferred to a dedicated VFR team who conduct the initial police response virtually, including:

- creating crime reports
- collecting evidence
- doing safeguarding referrals
- conducting risk assessments
- taking victim statements

Research methods

The College of Policing secured funding from the Cabinet Office to evaluate a series of interventions designed to reduce violence against women and girls (VAWG). This evaluation aimed to investigate the impact of using VFR to respond to domestic abuse victims' calls for service. The evaluation involved:

- data from police systems
- a telephone survey with victims
- a case file review
- interviews with police officers, staff and stakeholders
- observations of VFR and control room teams

Two different methods were used for the impact evaluation. One force had a randomised control trial, while the other had a quasi-experiment. A meta-analysis was also conducted with findings from these two pilots and a randomised control trial carried out by Kent Police in 2021 on rapid video response (RVR).

Findings

VFR can speed up response times for domestic abuse victims

Response times increased significantly in both forces. In one force, 76% of VFR cases received a response within an hour of the incident having been recorded, compared to 16% for business as usual (BAU) cases. In the other force, 97% of VFR cases received a response within an hour of the incident having been recorded, compared to 27% of BAU cases.

VFR may improve the quality of risk assessments

Appropriately detailed risk assessment forms were significantly more likely when VFR was used in one of the pilot forces, while the other force showed no difference between VFR and BAU conditions.

Mostly positive safeguarding measures for VFR victims

In both forces, data suggested that more safeguarding referrals were made in VFR cases, compared to BAU cases. In one force, the case file review found that information on support services was more likely to be shared with victims who had a VFR compared to those who had a BAU response. In the other force, the victim survey found that more BAU victims said they were referred to an independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA) compared to VFR victims. However, the sample size was small for both the case file review and victim survey.

Mixed impact on arrest

Arrest rate and time taken to arrest differed in the pilot forces. For one force, VFR had a similar arrest rate to BAU cases, with VFR having a shorter time to arrest compared to BAU. In the other force, the arrest rate was higher for BAU, which also had a shorter time to arrest compared to VFR.

Victims would choose VFR again

In both forces, most victims said they would prefer to receive the same response they had in the pilot study (VFR or BAU) if they needed to contact the police again for a similar incident in the future.

Conclusion and implications

This research suggested that VFR can provide a faster response to domestic abuse victims, while delivering similar levels of victim satisfaction as a BAU response. Other findings were more mixed for victims, in terms of safeguarding and rates of arrest for perpetrators. The findings and implications of this evaluation can be used by national bodies and forces who are introducing video response models to provide the initial police response.

- [Go to the full evaluation of video first response \(VFR\) to non-emergency domestic abuse calls](#)

Tags

Violence against women and girls Domestic abuse Domestic violence