

Checklists, guides and support (Appendix C)

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 16 September 2015 Updated 30 March 2026

The checklists are intended to be used as prompts and should be read alongside the more detailed content.

Risk management

Checklist: Risk management

Any risk management processes should:

- extend beyond the initial investigation, through the court process and beyond
- include a locally agreed risk management framework, for example, proportionality, legality, accountability, necessity and based on best intelligence or information at the time (PLANBI)
- provide officers and staff with possible actions which are proportionate to the risk and aimed at specific risk variables
- describe a tactical menu of intervention options for victims and offenders corresponding to each grading of risk – standard, medium and high
- be able to be adapted from a standard response to meet the needs of a serious and complex case, allowing for professional judgement and decisions to be made based on individual cases and problem solving in partnership
- remain dynamic so that significant changes may be reflected easily within assessments and management plans
- be subject to review at set intervals which are appropriate to the risk grading
- assist those in the criminal justice system to make decisions, for example, those which depend on information about the public interest and risk to victims and others
- be linked to multi-agency risk management processes which focus on high-risk cases, potential escalation and/or repeat incidents, for example, [multi-agency risk assessment conferences for domestic abuse \(MARACs\)](#)
- provide clarity on which internal unit and/or external agency takes the lead, or is responsible for certain actions as part of the risk management plan

- include the review of actions from the risk management plan as part of ongoing safety planning
- be communicated to the victim(s) to ensure that they are kept up to date throughout the process, where appropriate and achievable

Checklist: Reducing risk in identified cases

Officers should use the following measures to reduce risk in identified cases, as appropriate, by:

- implementing legal interventions (for example, arrest of suspect, use of restraining orders under the [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#))
- enforcing breaches of bail conditions and court orders
- implementing fast response systems in line with local police force policy
- investigating instances of witness intimidation promptly and thoroughly
- assisting the victim to improve security at their home, go to [safety planning](#)
- arranging for the victim to be taken to a place of safety, where appropriate
- being alert to the possibility that the perpetrator has reported the victim as missing and/or mentally ill so that the police will find the victim for them – go to [associated investigations, missing persons](#)
- issuing [domestic violence protection notices \(DVPNs\)](#) and applying for [domestic violence protection orders \(DVPOs\)](#)
- applying for specialist civil orders, for example, [violent offender orders](#), sexual harm prevention orders or sexual harm orders
- assisting victims to develop and implement their [safety plans](#)
- encouraging victims to access support
- making [appropriate referrals to support agencies](#)
- referring identified high-risk cases, potential escalation and/or repeat incidents to a [MARAC](#) or local equivalent
- linking into prison monitoring and intelligence processes when a perpetrator is in prison, whether on remand or serving a sentence
- ensuring that both a victim safety plan and a perpetrator management plan are established prior to the offender's release
- liaising with established multi-agency perpetrator management processes where applicable, for example, [multi-agency public protection arrangements \(MAPPA\)](#) or integrated offender management (IOM)

- ensuring that property exchange or recovery can occur safely, see [assisting with the recovery of property](#)

Safeguarding

Checklist: Principles of safety planning

Safety planning should be formulated to:

- assist in reducing the risk of further harm
- reflect and supply information to any risk identification and assessment processes
- build on existing coping strategies
- avoid frustrating existing safety mechanisms, for example, advice to block the perpetrator's messages would not be appropriate where the victim uses them to know when the perpetrator is angry and coming to their home so that they can prepare and make themselves safe
- reinforce the fact that abuse and violence may recur, and increase knowledge of the levels of danger the victim and children may face
- encourage victims and children to increase their own safety
- assist victims to focus on their own needs as opposed to the needs of the offender or organisations providing services
- give victims and children a wider range of options, including staying in their own home
- be kept confidential from the offender
- be part of a safety and protection process rather than a single occurrence
- be appropriate for all domestic abuse victims irrespective of their level of contact with the offender, for example, whether they are separated or living with the suspect
- involve other agencies or third parties where appropriate and safe to do so, for example, housing services or employers

Safety plans need to remain dynamic and should have review periods built into them to coincide with potential [trigger points](#).

Checklist: Developing safety plans with victims

Domestic abuse officers advising victims and managing safety provisions in plans should:

- establish how the victim can be contacted safely and ensure this information is passed to all officers in contact with the victim
- establish the location of the offender, if separated from the victim
- obtain the victim's views about the level of risk
- determine methods to facilitate any existing child contact arrangements safely
- ensure that the victim has the means to summon help in an emergency (this may include plans to summon help on their behalf when the offender is present) – consider issuing a **personal safety device or handset**
- identify where a victim might go if they have to leave quickly and what they will take with them
- encourage victims to report all incidents to the police or other organisations that will record the incident and maintain accurate and detailed records – including photographic evidence of injuries, body maps and details of the psychological effect of the abuse
- refer the victim to organisations that provide longer-term support and advice
- refer the case and details of the safety plan to a MARAC in cases identified as high risk, potential escalation and/or repeat incidents
- encourage the victim to seek professional advice about legal and financial matters and child contact
- inform victims of criminal or civil law provisions which may be applicable, for example, restraining or non-molestation orders ? the **National Centre for Domestic Violence** can assist with obtaining **civil orders**, as can other organisations
- make victims aware of the potential pitfalls of social media use, for example, identifying current location through status updates/geo-location systems on smartphones which automatically update to publicly display current location, or the risk of the account being hacked if the perpetrator is aware of the victim's passwords
- consider the possibility of spyware on the victim's computer or smartphone
- flag the risks associated with satnav use
- consider that victims with insecure immigration status, from minority ethnic communities, victims with disabilities or from socially isolated communities may fear contact with the police – such individuals or groups may have additional barriers that need to be overcome in safety plans
- involve the victim's workplace in the safety planning process where appropriate and safe to do so – an understanding employer who allows the victim time to prepare their exit strategy is an extremely valuable form of support
- involve schools and nurseries in safety planning

Checklist: Safety planning and children

Domestic abuse officers should encourage victims to:

- include children in the safety planning process – the primary aim of any safety plan for children is to escape from dangerous situations and avoid injury
- rehearse escape plans with children
- identify a safe place or person for children to go to if their parent is being attacked, preferably somewhere where it would be possible for them to contact the police
- ensure that children know how to contact the police and provide them with details of useful telephone numbers to use, if it is safe to do so
- check that any children are not the subject of abuse themselves
- involve schools and nurseries in safety planning, go to [Operation Encompass](#)

Witnessing domestic abuse can be very damaging to children and such incidents should be reported to the local authority's children's department. Where children have repeatedly witnessed domestic abuse, officers may need to encourage the local children's department to reassess their needs. Older children should be signposted to specialist domestic abuse services, including [young people's violence advisers \(YPVAs\)](#).

For information on the harmful effects of domestic abuse on children, go to [child abuse investigations](#).

Example safety plans

The following safety plans are included as examples and provide useful information for police officers in terms of practical safety advice for victims of domestic abuse.

If you are staying with your abuser

If you are staying with your abuser:

- seek professional advice and support from local support and outreach organisations, domestic abuse services and helplines
- consider how agencies can make contact safely, for example, through a work number or at a friend's address

- consider where you can quickly and easily use a telephone and who are safe people to contact – memorise a list of numbers for use in an emergency, such as friends, police, support organisations
- consider a signal (such as a codeword) with children, family, neighbours, friends or colleagues which will alert them to call the police if help is needed
- think through escape routes in advance, avoiding rooms with no exit or with weapons in (for example, bathroom or kitchen) where possible
- try to put by some money for fares and other expenses
- seek and obtain medical help for any injuries ensuring that they are recorded and if possible photographed ? these may be used at a later date to support court cases or rehousing applications
- consider changing online passwords regularly, especially for social networking accounts – this may not be appropriate where the perpetrator regularly accesses your accounts as part of coercive control as it may escalate risk
- avoid the use of satnavs and be aware that the perpetrator may monitor your movements by checking the satnav history if not wiped

If you are planning to leave

- If you are planning to leave:
- take care over whom to trust with any plans that you are making to leave
- avoid satnav use when travelling to a prospective new home or destination and always wipe the history if you do – your abuser may check it to see where you have been and find out what you are planning
- consider whether or not a **civil order** is a viable option – seek legal advice
- make an extra set of keys for home and/or car and store them somewhere safe
- make up a bag with spare clothes, telephone numbers, keys, money and keep it safe so you can take it quickly, or keep it with a trusted friend
- have the following available in case you have to leave quickly:
 - important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, driving licence, divorce papers, lease or mortgage papers, passports, insurance information, school and medical records, welfare and immigration documents, court documents
 - credit cards, bank account number
 - online passwords, especially for banking and social media

- some money
 - extra sets of keys – for car, house and work
 - medications and prescriptions, including those for children
 - telephone numbers and addresses for family, friends, doctors, lawyers and community agencies
 - clothing and comfort items for you and the children
 - photographs and other items of sentimental value such as jewellery
-
- take identification that might help others to protect you from the abuser, such as a recent photo of the abuser and their car details
 - talk to children about the possibility of leaving and try to take all the children, whatever long-term arrangements might be
 - avoid making any unusual changes to routine which may alert your abuser that something is going on

If you are living without your abuser after separation

If you are living without your abuser after separation (in your own home or after moving):

- seek expert legal advice on child contact and residence applications, and about options for [civil orders](#)
- change telephone numbers to ex-directory, screen calls and pre-programme emergency numbers into the telephone
- change all online passwords, especially for social networking accounts, and check privacy settings on social media sites
- take your satnav with you and wipe the history of any you are leaving behind
- change the locks and install a security system, smoke alarms and an outside lighting system
- notify neighbours, employers and schools about any injunction, and ask them to call the police immediately if they see the abuser nearby
- make sure that schools and those who care for your children know who has authorisation to collect them
- employ safety measures before, during and after contact visits with children
- consider changing children's schools, work patterns – hours and route taken – and the route taken to transport the children to school
- avoid banks, shops, and other places frequented when living with the abuser

- make up a codeword for family, colleagues, teachers or friends, so that they know when to call the police for help
- keep copies of all relevant paperwork (including civil injunctions) and make written records of any further incidents

Checklist: DVPO application

Service

The application must clearly state that:

- the DVPN was served on (date) at (time) and no more than 48 hours before the hearing
- if the respondent appears in custody in breach of the DVPN before the anticipated hearing date, they have been brought before the court within 24 hours of arrest

If the perpetrator does not attend the hearing, the application can still proceed in their absence provided the officer can show that:

- the NH was served in person, or
- the NH was served at the address provided by the perpetrator on the DVPN (it is deemed served),
or
- where no address was provided, reasonable efforts were made to serve the NH – setting out all the steps taken

Content

The content of the application must establish that:

- there are reasonable grounds for believing that the perpetrator has been violent or has threatened violence towards an associated person, and
- that the DVPO is necessary to protect the person from violence or threat of violence by the perpetrator.

Minimum content of the supporting file should include:

- front sheet
- case summary
- witness statements

- previous convictions of the perpetrator
- copy of the superintendent's authorisation for the DVPN

It is important to refer not only to the latest incident but also to the history of the couple (and any relevant history with previous partners) so that the court understands the context in which the incident has taken place. This should include any history of abuse, including emotional, financial and sexual abuse, and coercive and controlling behaviour.

The officer should also be able to explain any reasons for not charging.

The proposed terms, usually based on the DVPN, should be set out in full.

Initial contact

Checklist: Key considerations for front counter staff taking a report of domestic abuse

If the report is made by a victim:

- take them out of public view to reduce the risk of the abuser seeing them
- establish if the victim and any children are at immediate risk, for example, if they are fleeing the perpetrator
- establish if the person making the report is subject to time constraints and flag this to the responding officer if applicable so that the report can be prioritised
- if the victim is unable to wait for an officer to become available to speak to them, establish when and how they can be contacted without placing them at further risk
- if they are believed to be at risk of serious harm if they leave without being seen by an officer, response should be prioritised

If the report is made by another person, for example, a concerned family member, friend or neighbour, they may also be at risk if the perpetrator discovers that they have reported the abuse and similar considerations apply.

Call handler quick reference guide: domestic abuse

Ensure immediate safety

- Prioritise safety of the victim and children.
- Identify if any immediate risk or time constraints.
- Identify if any parties in need of immediate medical assistance and request if required.
- Give safety, first aid or other appropriate advice.
- If suspect still present at the scene, keep caller on the line so background noise is recorded.
- If suspect has left the scene, keep caller on the line, advise to secure premises, and agree key word to signify return of suspect.
- If call is cut off, urgently reassess call grading.
- Remember to keep the caller informed of dispatch and arrival at the scene.

Gather information from the caller

Confirm details throughout and seek clarification if unclear.

Obtain standard details of incidents and parties involved. In addition, you should ask if:

- there are any children or vulnerable adults normally resident at the address living in the household and if they are safe
- there is any history of domestic abuse and if so, whether there has been a previous referral to MARAC
- any weapons have been used or are available to the suspect
- anyone is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- any party has communication difficulties or special needs
- any court orders or bail conditions apply

Obtain a description of the suspect

Record the caller's account verbatim, along with details of demeanour of the caller and any background noise.

Go to [Checklist: Information gathering](#)

Equip the attending officer with information

Officers need to know about all information relevant to risk assessment. They also need to know anything which can help them to better understand the incident and the context.

You should make the appropriate background checks for previous domestic abuse history and other risk-related information:

- IT and/or paper-based systems – [Police National Computer \(PNC\)](#), [Police National Database \(PND\)](#), [ViSOR](#)
- check for markers or alerts, including [MARAC](#) flag
- previous risk assessments
- bail conditions and civil or criminal court orders
- child protection information

Provide details to the officer of:

- any children or vulnerable adults present or normally resident at the address
- any communication difficulties or special needs
- results of background checks
- any factors affecting nature of response, for example, injury, weapons (especially firearms), drugs or alcohol
- description of the suspect
- incident exactly as described by caller

If the suspect is believed to have left the local area, this should be specifically flagged to the officer so that contact can be established and appropriate information exchanged with relevant police forces to ensure victim safety.

Go to [Checklist: Details to be provided to the attending officer.](#)

All CAD entries must be closed with a reference number. They should not be closed until contact has been made with the victim and a risk assessment carried out.

Checklist: Information gathering

Full details of the incident and of all parties involved should be recorded and flagged appropriately on the incident log, in line with local policy. Call handlers or report takers should seek, record and disseminate the information listed below. In situations where fast deployment is required, an abridged checklist may be used to identify risks associated with the deployment, and then further information can be gathered once the immediate risk has been managed.

- Location and identity of the caller or person making the report.
- Location of the incident.
- Location of the suspect, victim and children.
- Whether the parties are injured.
- Severity of any injury and whether medical assistance is required.
- Identity of all parties involved including the victim, children and suspect (for example, names (correctly spelt), sex, dates of birth, home addresses, telephone numbers).
- Whether there are any children normally resident at the address and, where present, if they are safe.
- Whether any weapons have been used (in particular firearms or knives, although any object used as a weapon is relevant).
- Whether any weapons are available to the suspect and whether the suspect or another household member holds a licence for a firearm.
- Whether communication difficulties exist, for example, if English is not the caller's first language and officers will require an interpreter.
- Whether there are any special needs, for example, mental or physical disability.
- In what capacity the parties are involved.
- Whether any person present appears drunk or has taken drugs.
- Whether there is any history of domestic abuse or other relevant offending.
- Description of the suspect.
- If the suspect is believed to have left the area and, if so, where they are believed to have gone.
- Whether any court orders apply.
- First account of what the caller says has occurred (recording it verbatim).
- Details of the demeanour of the victim, suspect and others present, and background noise (including shouting, words spoken).

Call handlers should make appropriate checks of IT and/or paper-based systems for any previous reported domestic abuse history and other relevant information:

- previous risk assessments
- PNC checks for both the suspect and the victim (paying particular attention to any markers or alerts),
- the PND
- bail conditions

- civil injunctions
- court orders relating to child contact
- child protection intelligence systems – child protection register (in Wales), local authority children’s services information on children subject to a child protection plan (in England)
- ViSOR
- any record of current or previous **MARAC** involvement with the victim, for example, if they have a **MARAC** flag on the local force system, where such a flag is used

Checklist: Deployment

Call handlers should:

- prioritise the safety of those at the incident, members of the public and officers
- ensure that medical assistance is en route, where appropriate
- make sure that support (backup) is available for the officer(s) attending the incident, where appropriate
- inform the caller when an officer(s) has been dispatched
- inform the officer attending of all relevant information (see checklist below)
- inform the caller when police have arrived at the scene so that the officer(s) can be safely admitted to the premises

Checklist: Details to be provided to the attending officer

Information to be provided to the attending should include:

- details of any children present
- the results of the IT and/or paper-based search outlined above
- whether the victim has a **MARAC** flag
- any communication difficulties (language, hearing, speech)
- any other factors that may affect the police response, for example, injury, the presence of weapons (especially firearms), drug or alcohol use
- a description of the suspect, where necessary
- whether supervisors are aware of the incident, in accordance with local policy

First response

First responders quick reference guide: domestic abuse

Ensure immediate safety

En route to the scene

- Consider the risk to officer and others at the scene (dynamic risk assessment – ongoing).
- Get a full picture of the incident and context from the call handler.
- If equipped with [body-worn video](#), consider switching it on.

On arrival at the scene

- Ensure the safety of officers, victim, children and others at the scene.
- Separate the parties.
- Assess the need for first-aid or other medical assistance.
- If entry to property is refused, consider [police powers of entry](#).
- Check the welfare and safety of any children – see the child and speak to them unless not in their best interest to do so – consider referring to local authority children’s social care or exercising police protection powers.

Go to [Checklist: Actions on arrival at the scene](#).

Build rapport

- Listen to the victim and make them feel believed.
- Reassure the victim that the role of the police is to protect them, not judge them.
- Ask yourself why a victim is being hostile or uncooperative and do not take it personally.
- Understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, especially [controlling or coercive behaviour](#).
- Take each incident seriously no matter how many times you are called to the same address.
- Explain what you are doing and why.

See:

- Why a victim might appear unwilling to engage
- Why do victims continue abusive relationships?

Carry out an initial investigation

Build an **evidence-led case** that does not rely solely on the victim's support.

- Record demeanour of all parties and photograph/visually record scene and injuries.
- Protect the scene, including the victim, suspect and other witnesses.
- Obtain first accounts from victims and witnesses, including first disclosure witnesses.
- Remember you are a witness and your statement should include everything you see and hear in connection with the incident, including any details indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour.

Go to checklists:

- **Protecting the scene**
- **Gaining a first account from a victim or witness**
- **Conducting the victim interview**
- **Statement of the first officer at the scene**

You should also familiarise yourself with **investigative development** in domestic abuse cases.

At the scene, consider calling a crime scene examiner and think about:

- **physical evidence** – clothing and bedding, weapons, signs of disturbance
- **forensics** – blood pattern distribution, other biological evidence, footwear, DNA
- **photographic evidence**
- **CCTV**
- **house-to-house enquiries**
- **technology and social media** ? mobile phones, social media, email

For later development if you are OIC, think about:

- further database checks – **PNC**, **PND**, **ViSOR**
- **foreign intelligence checks**
- **bad character evidence**
- **medical records**
- **financial information**
- **prison intelligence**
- **automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)**
- **CCTV**
- **covert tactics** and **sources**

Go to checklists:

- [Lines of enquiry](#)
- [Use of photographic evidence](#)
- [Evidence-led prosecution](#)

Take positive action

Never ask the victim if they want the suspect arrested. That is your decision.

Consider [arrest](#).

- Is it lawful, proportionate and necessary (Code G)? If so, you should arrest and will have to justify your decision if you do not.
- Avoid dual arrests at the scene if possible, especially if there are children present.

Dual arrests complicate the prosecution process and may leave children without either parent for a period of time. Investigation to identify the primary perpetrator at the scene is preferable unless dual arrests are considered necessary and proportionate in the circumstances. This does not prevent investigation and later arrest of the second party if both appear to have committed offences.

Go to:

- [arresting the right person](#)
- [dual arrests](#)
- [determining the primary perpetrator and dealing with counter-allegations](#)

If there are insufficient grounds for arrest or it would be disproportionate, you should focus on victim safety and prevention of further incidents. Consider other [positive action](#), such as:

- [removal to prevent breach of the peace](#)
- [domestic violence protection notices and orders](#)
- [civil orders](#) – non-molestation, occupation or prohibited steps orders

Out of court disposals ([cautions](#) or [restorative justice](#)) may also be an option. They are rarely appropriate in domestic abuse cases, however, and supervisor/specialist input should be sought if being considered.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Identify risk

You are responsible for risk identification and assessment unless and until the case is handed over to a specialist or another investigating officer.

- Investigate the circumstances of the incident comprehensively to identify all issues relevant to your decision about level of risk, including any indication of controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Make an honest risk assessment based on your findings.
- Your risk assessment may be the only one done in response to the incident, depending on how you grade the risk – it needs to be as accurate as possible.

Get it right first time – use your force-recommended risk assessment tool, alongside professional judgement, intelligence and investigation.

Go to [risk identification and assessment](#).

Initiate support and protection for the victim (initial safety planning)

Principles

- Every victim must be safer after police contact.
- [Keep the victim informed](#).

Your job is to:

- initiate [safety planning](#) and set out options
- put into place any [urgent safeguarding](#) actions – a matter of hours may make all the difference
- refer to specialists for more detailed safety planning and referrals, for example, to a domestic abuse specialist officer, [independent domestic violence advisers \(IDVAs\)](#), or [MARAC](#), in accordance with force policy.

If the case is not referred, safety planning remains your responsibility.

Options

- Consider if a [domestic violence protection notice \(DVPN\)](#) is appropriate.

- **Referral to voluntary sector support agencies**, for example, Victim Support, Women's Aid, Refuge.
- **Emergency accommodation**.
- **Improve home security** and target-hardening measures, for example, change of locks, alarms, lighting.
- Improve personal security, for example, issue **personal safety device**.
- **safety planning**, for example, cocoon watch, NPT involvement, sanctuary schemes.
- Methods to **manage the perpetrator's behaviour**.

Ensure a good handover

Ensure the handover pack contains all information relevant to the victim and children's safety.

This should include:

- any risk assessment and grading of risk
- information relevant to ongoing risk assessment, including any details indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour
- information relevant to the custody sergeant's decision to bail the suspect, with or without conditions, or remand in custody
- information relevant to an application before a court for a remand in custody, for example, colour photos of injuries
- details of any safety planning measures taken and any outstanding

Give the victim a point of contact and remind them to call the emergency services if there are any further incidents or bail breaches.

Normal **investigation handover** considerations apply.

First response national decision model (NDM) tool

Code of Practice for Ethical Policing

The Code of Practice for Ethical Policing states that there is a requirement to ensure that staff understand the requirements of, and are supported to implement, the Victims' Code. This includes consideration of their welfare needs and referral to support services.

Build rapport

- Listen to the victim and make them feel believed.
- Reassure the victim that the role of the police is to protect them, not judge them.
- Ask yourself why a victim is being hostile or uncooperative and do not take it personally.
- Understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, especially controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Take each incident seriously no matter how many times you are called to the same address.
- Explain what you are doing and why.

Keep the victim informed

Go to keep the victim informed.

Gather information and intelligence

Get a full picture of the incident and context from the call handler

Additional information and intelligence gathering to build on the call handler information could include:

- further database checks – PNC, PND, ViSOR, ASSIST
- foreign intelligence checks
- bad character evidence
- medical records
- financial information
- prison intelligence
- ANPR
- CCTV
- covert tactics and sources

Assess threat and risk and develop a working strategy

- Consider the risk to officer and others at the scene (dynamic risk assessment – ongoing).
- If equipped with body-worn video, consider switching it on.
- Ensure the safety of officers, victim, children and others at the scene.
- Separate the parties.

- Assess the need for first aid or other medical assistance.

Consider powers and policy

- If entry to property is refused, consider [police powers of entry](#).
- Never ask the victim if they want the suspect arrested. That is your decision.
- Consider [arrest](#) – is it lawful, proportionate and necessary (Code G)? If so, you should arrest and will have to justify your decision if you do not.

Identify options and contingencies

Positive action

[Arrest](#) must be proportionate, lawful and necessary. Officers should give the victim breathing space, allow time to pursue lines of enquiry and show the victim you are taking them seriously.

Avoid [dual arrests](#) at the scene if possible, especially if there are children present. Dual arrests complicate the prosecution process and may leave children without either parent for a period of time. Investigation to identify the primary perpetrator at the scene is preferable unless dual arrests are considered necessary and proportionate in the circumstances. This does not prevent investigation and later arrest of the second party if both appear to have committed offences.

See arresting the right person, dual arrests and determining the primary perpetrator and dealing with counter-allegations.

If there are insufficient grounds for arrest or it would be disproportionate, focus on victim safety and prevention of further incidents.

Consider other positive action:

- [removal to prevent breach of the peace](#)
- [domestic violence protection notices and orders](#)
- [civil orders](#) – non-molestation, occupation or prohibited steps orders

Investigation

- Build an evidence-led case that does not rely solely on the victim's support.

- Record demeanour of all parties and photograph/video scene and injuries.
- Protect the scene, including the victim, suspect and other witnesses.
- Obtain first accounts from victims and witnesses.
- Remember you are a witness and your statement should include everything you see and hear in connection with the incident.

At the scene, consider calling a crime scene examiner and think about:

- **physical evidence** – clothing and bedding, weapons, signs of disturbance
- **forensics** – blood pattern distribution, other biological evidence, footwear, DNA
- **photographic evidence**
- **CCTV**
- **house-to-house enquiries**
- **technology and social media** ? mobile phones, social media, email

Safety

Check the welfare and safety of any children – see and speak to the child if possible. Consider referring to local authority children’s social care or exercising police protection powers.

Initiate **safety planning** and set out options.

Put in place any **urgent safeguarding** actions – a matter of hours may make all the difference.

Refer to specialists for more detailed safety planning and referrals, eg, to a domestic abuse specialist officer, **IDVA**, or **MARAC**, in accordance with force policy.

If the case is not referred, safety planning remains your responsibility.

Possible options include:

- Consider if a **domestic violence protection notice (DVPN)** is appropriate.
- **Referral to voluntary sector support agencies**, for example, Victim Support, Women’s Aid, Refuge.
- **Emergency accommodation**.
- **Improve home security** and target-hardening measures, for example, change of locks, alarms, lighting.

- Improve personal security, for example, issue [personal safety device](#).
- [safety planning](#), for example, cocoon watch, NPT involvement, sanctuary schemes.
- Methods to [manage the perpetrator's behaviour](#).

Take action and review what happened

You are responsible for [risk identification and assessment](#) unless and until the case is handed over to a specialist or other investigating officer.

- Investigate the circumstances of the incident comprehensively to identify all issues relevant to your decision about level of risk.
- Make an honest risk assessment based on your findings, including any details indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour.
- Your risk assessment may be the only one done in response to the incident, depending on how you grade the risk – it needs to be as accurate as possible.

Ensure the [handover](#) pack contains all information relevant to the victim and children's safety.

This should include:

- any risk assessment and grading of risk
- information relevant to ongoing risk assessment, including any details indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour
- information relevant to the custody sergeant's decision to bail the suspect, with or without conditions, or remand in custody
- information relevant to an application before a court for a remand in custody, eg, colour photos of injuries
- details of any safety planning measures taken
- details of any additional safety planning required

Give the victim a point of contact and remind them to call the emergency services if there are any further incidents or bail breaches.

First response supervisor's checklist - domestic abuse

Checklist of areas for observation and improvement	Yes or No	Areas for improvement
1. Victims made to feel safer after police intervention		
2. First responder demonstrates empathy		
3. First responder not judging a victim's life choices		
4. First responder not judging coping mechanisms such as alcohol, drugs or self-harm		
5. Collection of evidence and evidence-led prosecutions		
6. Completion of DARA as a tool to assist investigation and safeguarding not a tick box exercise		
7. Recognition of and asking about coercive control		
8. Checks on children's welfare and reassurance given to children at the scene		
9. Recognition of, and recording offender manipulation of first responder		

Checklist of areas for observation and improvement	Yes or No	Areas for improvement
10. History checks before arrival at scene from the call taker		
11. Addressing counter allegations		
12. Ensuring privacy when separating parties		
13. Telling the victim they are believed and it was the right decision to seek help		
14. Demonstrates an understanding of why victims can be perceived to be uncooperative		
15. Safety planning with a victim and children		
16. Safeguarding according to need		
17. Using domestic violence protection notices (DVPNs), domestic violence protection orders (DVPOs) and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)		

Checklist of areas for observation and improvement	Yes or No	Areas for improvement
18. Demonstrates understanding of the MARAC process and what the MARAC marker means (if applicable)		
19. Dealing appropriately with the needs of victims from diverse communities		
20. Targeting perpetrators for disruption and diversion		
21. Understanding and communicating with young victims and young people that harm in relationships		
22. Recognising harassment or stalking behaviours		
23. Recognising interfamilial DA and its dynamics		
24. Taking positive action and explaining this to the victim		
25. Referral pathways for victims, children and perpetrators		

Checklist: Actions on arrival at the scene

On arrival at the scene, to ensure the safety of victims and children and to preserve evidence, officers should:

- reassess victim, child and officer safety, including immediate risk, particularly in respect of access to or use of weapons
- make an immediate assessment of the need for first aid or other medical assistance for any person
- separate the parties and deal with them all independently, including any children
- confirm the identity of the suspect and circulate a full description via the radio system if they are no longer at the scene
- establish who is or was at the scene, including any children
- request appropriate checks on the suspect and household (including warrants, bail conditions, restraining orders, civil orders, child protection register/plan, ViSOR, PND, firearms licences or intelligence reports linking the suspect and household members to weapons) if not already done
- make accurate records of everything said by the suspect, victim and any witnesses, including children (significant comments by a young child may be admissible as *res gestae* or hearsay)
- consider the need for an interpreter and follow the advice set out below when choosing one
- review information received from the call handler to compare with what is being reported at the scene – where a serious complaint was initially made but the victim minimises this at the scene, the officer should explore why – it is common for victims to do this when police arrive because their attendance has removed the immediate risk and the victim may consider that the situation has normalised
- record the demeanour of the suspect, victim and any other witnesses, including children
- record any significant statements made by the suspect so that they can be used in later proceedings, for example, as part of [interview planning](#)
- make a comprehensive assessment of available evidence, eg, damage, injuries, blood spatter, and consider the best way to record it
- take photographs of the scene and consider visually recording evidence where that facility is available – go to [body-worn video](#)
- secure the safety of victims in their home if at all possible so that they do not feel further victimised – if this is unsafe or not possible, officers should consider taking them to another place of safety, for example, the home of a relative (not appropriate if 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) is

suspected, unless the relative in question is known to be opposed to the practice) or a refuge if available under local arrangements for housing and refuge provision

- obtain an overview of what has occurred, taking into account the established risk factors associated with domestic abuse, go to [understanding risk and vulnerability in the context of domestic abuse](#)
- ensure that information relating to the suspect is included in any risk management processes, even if it does not directly relate to this relationship

Checklist: Protecting the scene

Where applicable, officers should:

- seek advice in complex cases
- note that the victim is often the primary source of evidence and should be treated as such, with due regard to their safety, state of mind and ability to cope with forensic requests
- note that the suspect and other persons, including children, at the premises may also be sources of evidence
- secure, preserve and control the scene to limit any access until they can adequately assess the situation
- remove people and animals from the immediate scene of the incident, and, ideally, from the whole area
- establish physical secondary scene parameters – potentially the whole of the premises
- note that the suspect's actions following the incident may create further sites of forensic interest
- consider erecting cordons and putting in place a loggist to record persons entering and leaving (depending on the severity of the incident)
- consider any potential areas of contamination that could compromise the integrity of evidential material
- request a CSI to attend or record the reasons why a CSI was not called or did not attend
- establish a work base in a safe area of the premises
- ensure the scene is photographed or visually recorded as soon as possible
- secure and preserve CCTV evidence if it exists
- secure and preserve mobile phones or computer equipment

Checklist: Police powers of entry

Powers exist in the following circumstances:

- under the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\) section 17\(1\)\(b\)](#) a constable may enter and search any premises for the purpose of arresting a person for an indictable offence
- under [PACE section 17\(1\)\(e\)](#) a constable may enter and search premises for the purpose of saving life or limb or preventing serious damage to property
- under common law a constable has the power to enter premises to prevent or deal with a breach of the peace
- under the [Children Act 1989 section 48](#) a warrant may be obtained to search for children who may be in need of protection
- where a power of arrest has been attached to a civil order, such as an occupation order, and there has been a breach

Officers should keep a record of all searches, in line with the [PACE Codes of Practice](#)

Victim support and welfare

Checklist: Taking comprehensive withdrawal statements

A withdrawal statement should contain the following information:

- confirmation of whether the original statement given to the police was true – if the original account has to be amended, an explanation for this should be included
- whether the victim has been put under pressure to withdraw
- nature of the original allegation (if not fully covered in a previous statement)
- victim's reasons for withdrawing the allegation
- with whom they have discussed the case – particularly anyone who has advised them (a solicitor, for example)
- whether any civil proceedings have been, or are likely to be, instigated
- impact on the victim's life and that of any children if the case continues

Victim interview strategy

Checklist: Conducting the victim interview

Interviewers should elicit the following information, depending on the individual circumstances of each case.

Current incident

- Full details of the current incident, including evidence to support any alleged offence and points to prove.
- Nature and seriousness of the victim's injuries (physical and emotional).
- Whether a weapon was used (how and what type) and whether any attempt at choking, suffocation, drowning or strangulation was made.
- Victim's view of how the incident stopped, for example victim appeased the perpetrator, the incident was interrupted by someone or something, or the perpetrator stopped of their own accord.
- Whether any children were present and, if so, the effect that the incident has had on them.
- Details of witnesses present during the incident.
- Details of any threats made before or since the incident.
- Whether the suspect planned the incident.
- Whether any sexual offences have been disclosed arising from the current incident.

General information

- Details of relevant family members.
- Details of any third party to whom disclosure of abuse has been made.
- Details of any relevant social networking accounts (both victim and perpetrator).
- Whether there is likely to be any supporting evidence on mobile phones or in email communications.
- Medical consent where relevant.

Context

- History of the relationship and any other incidents.
- Whether any previous sexual offences have been disclosed.
- Any incidents involving previous partners of the suspect.
- If they are aware of the suspect ever having lived in another force area or abroad for a significant period of time.
- Whether the parties are separated.
- Victim's view of the future of the relationship.

- Victim's view of the likelihood of further abuse and victim's views about their own safety and that of any children.
- Whether any civil action has been taken by the victim or any previous partners.
- Whether the perpetrator is believed to be experiencing issues relating to mental health, substance misuse or financial difficulties, or to have a propensity to harm animals.
- Any specialist skills the perpetrator may have, for example martial arts or other combat skills, firearms, covert investigation.

Controlling or coercive behaviour

- Victim's view of how they feel the suspect controls their life and, if so, how (this can be difficult to explain and describe to an outsider as the small controlling behaviours on their own can sound trivial).
- Victim's views on the rules or expected behaviours set by the suspect in the relationship, for example what the victim must and must not do.
- Victim's account of any threats used to maintain control, for example to 'out' their sexual orientation, medical condition, immigration status, other personal information or criminal activity, or to use intimate photos on social media to cause upset and risk of exclusion or dishonour from wider family members or community.
- Victim's account of the use of threats relating to children, for example to limit child contact, to take the children, or to have them taken away.
- Whether other persons are involved in planning and/or executing the abuse.

Some of these points may provide a template for witness interviews. Officers should consider obtaining a victim personal statement as part of the interview, go to [victim personal statement](#). Information obtained from interviews with victims and witnesses should be processed according to local policies and procedures.

See [victim withdrawals](#) for what to do when the victim withdraws support for a prosecution.

Evidence gathering

Checklist: Lines of enquiry

Officers should consider these potential lines of enquiry:

- history of the relationship
- previous incidents of abuse, including those with prior partners, for example records of previous calls to the police
- local police intelligence systems, national and international systems, including the [PNC](#), [PND](#), and [ViSOR](#)
- [foreign national criminal conviction checks](#) if the suspect, victim or witness is a foreign national
- incidents of sexual abuse not previously disclosed
- incidents that have been witnessed by children
- incidents witnessed by other family members, friends, colleagues
- witnesses to whom first disclosure may have been made
- [house-to-house enquiries](#)
- incidents that have occurred outside the home or in public
- previous threats made to the victim, children, family members or friends
- child contact agreements or disputes
- [civil orders](#)
- medical information that may constitute evidence – consent should be obtained where relevant
- asking about injuries that are not immediately visible, for example those concealed by clothing or hair, or older healed injuries that could be confirmed by further enquiry or medical investigation
- evidence held by other agencies such as housing services, children’s social care departments, education, probation and medical professionals
- evidence held from any data source on previous victims
- evidence of social isolation, for example, lack of contact between the victim and their family, friends, neighbours or schools (officers might also ascertain whether medical appointments have not been made or kept, or if the suspect has accompanied the victim to medical appointments)
- bank statements which could show evidence of financial control by the perpetrator
- phone and email records
- social media

Checklist: Spotlight on controlling or coercive behaviour

In addition to standard lines of enquiry, officers investigating a potential [offence of controlling or coercive behaviour](#) under [the Serious Crime Act 2015 s 76](#) should focus on identifying a pattern of behaviour across different types of evidence. Much of it will be evidence of the victim’s and

perpetrator's day to day living and their interaction.

Types of evidence which may be useful include:

- records of communication between the victim and perpetrator, for example emails, phone records, text messages, social media
- audio or visual recordings of interaction between the victim and perpetrator, demonstrating body language and tone, for example 999 recordings, CCTV, BWV footage
- local enquiries, for example neighbours, regular deliveries, postal services, window cleaner
- witness testimony, for example from family and friends, as to observed behaviour by both parties and its effect and impact
- diaries kept by the victim and/or children
- records of lifestyle and household, including photographic evidence of the scene
- evidence of isolation, for example lack of contact with family and friends, withdrawal from social activities and clubs
- records of interaction with services which show the perpetrator adopting a dominant role, for example always accompanying the victim to banking or medical appointments
- bank records showing financial control
- medical records
- GPS tracking devices installed on mobile phones, tablets, vehicles
- care plan, where the perpetrator has caring responsibilities

These are not exhaustive and any evidence which shows a pattern of control or coercion is relevant.

For further information, go to:

- [Home Office Controlling or Coercive Behaviour Statutory Guidance Framework](#)
- [Crown Prosecution Service](#)

Checklist: Gaining a first account from a victim or witness

Although an MG11 (section 9 statement) is the most desirable form of victim account, it is not the only potentially admissible account. [Body-worn video](#), a [999](#) call or a PNB entry are all potentially admissible in an evidence-led prosecution, that is, a prosecution based on hearsay or [circumstantial evidence](#), or featuring a [hostile witness](#).

When speaking to a child:

- consider using an intermediary from the outset – children may find it intimidating to talk to police officers
- consider the language used – they may find it difficult to understand legal or technical words

Taking the account

- Ensure each party is spoken to separately and out of earshot of others.
- Explain the investigation processes and procedures to them and make it clear that the police take these matters seriously.
- Explain that support is available to them.
- Obtain a first account as soon as practicable after the event, when the witness may be most able to recall the incident.
- Record first accounts given by witnesses, especially those relating to suspect descriptions, for example, clothing worn.
- Make an accurate record of everything that is said by all parties.
- Explore the question of risk and potential risk with all witnesses, especially risk to the victim, any children and the suspect.
- Consider visually recording the first account from the victim and/or witnesses in serious cases and cases with vulnerable or intimidated witnesses.
- If a victim decides not to make a formal complaint, officers should record this in their pocket notebook but should not ask the victim to sign it. Even if a victim does not make a formal allegation, officers should still investigate thoroughly and record a crime if there is reasonable cause to believe an offence has been committed.

Go to [victim interviews](#) for a comprehensive list of information to be obtained in a full victim statement.

Considerations for the officer taking the account:

- Consider that the victim may be distressed and that it is not appropriate to ask them what course of action they wish the police to take – it is never appropriate to ask if they want the perpetrator to be arrested.
- Remember that the victim may be subject to controlling or coercive behaviour and this may affect their response and attitude towards the officer.

- Note that previous withdrawals of support for a prosecution should not adversely influence the decision to arrest.
- Consider the individual needs of victims and witnesses, for example, disability or cultural heritage.

Follow-up to taking the account:

- Provide the victim with referral details of independent advocacy or outreach services where available, for example, [independent domestic violence advisers \(IDVAs\)](#). Not all IDVA services accept self-referrals.
- Preserve any written notes made during initial victim or witness interviews in line with [Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996](#) requirements for unused material.
- If a victim is taken to a refuge or other place of safety, never disclose this to the suspect or their representative, as this not only places the victim at risk but also refuge staff and other users.
- Brief interviewing officers on useful lines of questioning if the suspect is to be formally interviewed later by a different officer ? for further information, go to [suspect interviews](#).

Checklist: Statement of the first officer at the scene

Statements should, where relevant, cover the officer's initial appraisal of:

- victim's injuries
- suspect's injuries
- presence of children and any injuries they have sustained
- any damage to property
- signs of ongoing disturbance on arrival at the scene, for example, shouting heard at the premises
- observations of the physical scene, for example, overturned furniture, broken ornaments, marks on clothing
- evidence of disturbance outside the property
- demeanour of the suspect, victim and witnesses, including children
- any details which may be indicative of controlling or coercive behaviour – this may be a combination of comments by either the perpetrator or the victim, body language or any other details observed
- identification of risk factors – this may include the officer's opinion (supported by reasoning) of the current or potential risk to the victim(s) and any children, or to the suspect, for example, suicide
- allegations made by the victim

- comments made by the victim or witnesses at the scene – if they do not subsequently make a statement, these may still be admissible as **res gestae** or hearsay
- unsolicited comments or significant statements made by the suspect

Checklist: Protecting the scene

Where applicable, officers should:

- seek advice in complex cases
- note that the victim is often the primary source of evidence and should be treated as such, with due regard to their safety, state of mind and ability to cope with forensic requests
- note that the suspect and other persons, including children, at the premises may also be sources of evidence
- secure, preserve and control the scene to limit any access until they can adequately assess the situation
- remove people and animals from the immediate scene of the incident, and, ideally, from the whole area
- establish physical secondary scene parameters – potentially the whole of the premises
- note that the suspect's actions following the incident may create further sites of forensic interest
- consider erecting cordons and putting in place a loggist to record persons entering and leaving (depending on the severity of the incident)
- consider any potential areas of contamination that could compromise the integrity of evidential material
- request a CSI to attend or record the reasons why a CSI was not called or did not attend
- establish a work base in a safe area of the premises
- ensure the scene is photographed or visually recorded as soon as possible
- secure and preserve CCTV evidence if it exists
- secure and preserve mobile phones or computer equipment

Physical evidence

Checklist: Use of photographic evidence

Officers using photographic evidence techniques should:

- photograph all non-intimate injuries (victim and suspect) – bite marks should be photographed as soon as possible
- photograph or visually record all damage and disruption at the scene (including damaged clothing and weapons) and any other evidence that might assist in corroborating victim or witness accounts or proving the offence(s)
- use CSI photographs whenever possible in domestic abuse cases, irrespective of whether initial non-intimate photographs have been taken
- visually record footage of crime scenes when appropriate, especially in serious cases
- make arrangements for the victim to be re-photographed when their injuries may be more apparent
- take particular care with lighting when photographing darker skin tones as bruising can be more difficult to see
- use photographs proactively to assist in the investigative interview, go to [suspect interviews](#)
- provide custody officers with photographs to assist them with decision making, particularly in respect of police bail
- attach photographs to the file of evidence for the CPS, magistrates and judiciary

Officers should not take photographs of either sexual or non-sexual injuries in intimate areas. These should be taken by medical professionals following national guidance. Go to Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine [Guidance for best practice for the management of intimate images that may become evidence in court](#).

Suspect strategy

Checklist: Custody plan

When detaining a domestic abuse suspect, custody staff should:

- ensure the presence of an appropriate adult as required by [the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 \(PACE\) Code C](#)
- consider the suspect's right to a telephone call and assess the potential to harass and intimidate the victim, children, family members and potential witnesses – the phone call can be denied or delayed in connection with an indictable offence if an inspector (or above) is of the view that its exercise may result in interference with or physical harm to other people, but the restriction should be proportionate and last no longer than necessary (Code C, paragraph 5.6 and Annex B,

paragraphs 1 and 2)

- ensure any telephone calls are supervised – they can be terminated if being abused (Code C, paragraph 5.7)
- request that telephone calls are made in English so that they can be adequately monitored – if the suspect does not speak English, consider whether it may be appropriate to require the attendance of an interpreter to assist with supervising the call, for example where HBA is suspected and the victim may be at risk from other family or community members
- record if a suspect threatens to commit suicide, or a risk assessment indicates a suicide risk, and include this both in the custody risk assessment process for the care of the suspect and pre-release. Be aware that there is a statistically higher risk of suicide by perpetrators of domestic abuse after they come to the notice of the police. In cases of suicide risk, just as in case of physical injury, a referral must be made to the custody health practitioner.
- consider suicide threats by the suspect as a risk factor for further harm being caused to the victim and children – include in any decision-making process for police bail and ensure those responsible for victim risk assessment are made aware
- record significant statements on the custody record and invite the suspect to sign and verify them
- record injuries to the suspect and any explanation offered
- arrange for an appropriate healthcare professional to examine the suspect if injury is complained of or observed and record any findings on the custody record – this should also be done if the suspect raises self-defence in interview
- document on the custody record any intimidating, aggressive or threatening behaviour exhibited by the suspect
- ensure that custody CCTV is reviewed and retained if it is likely to be of evidential value, for example if it captures relevant conduct and demeanour of the suspect on arrival in custody or any comments made by them within the custody area
- consider placing suspects arrested for breach of the peace before the next available court

Arresting officers should ensure that:

- photographs of the suspect are obtained, including any clothing or jewellery that might have inflicted a specific injury to the victim
- evidence is seized appropriately (particularly in circumstances where the suspect or their associates have access to the scene) and, where possible, taken to the custody suite and recorded on the custody record – care should be taken to avoid evidence contamination

- photographic evidence of injuries and/or the scene is available in the custody suite and used in the interviewing and investigation processes
- any breach of order is identified and dealt with robustly

Checklist: Considerations when using interpreters in domestic abuse cases

- Make every effort to source an accredited interpreter, check the identity of the interpreter and whether they have a disclosure and barring service (DBS) disclosure certificate and can present it. All interpreters (excluding telephone interpreting) are required to be vetted to NPPV3.
- Check that the suspect, victim or witnesses are not known to the interpreter, where possible.
- If the interpreter is known to the victim, witness or suspect, this should not be in anything other than a professional capacity – this is particularly important in cases of suspected HBA and only accredited interpreters should be used in such circumstances.
- Check that the interpreter has no other interest in the case, whether personal, financial or commercial.
- Where possible, select the interpreter to conform to reasonable criteria set by the suspect, victim or witnesses, which may include a preference for specific sex, religion, regional origin, political affiliation and cultural background.
- Where possible, use different interpreters for the suspect, victim and witnesses.
- General guidance is that interpreters living in close proximity to the interview premises should be preferred, but in domestic abuse and 'honour'-based abused (HBA) cases it may be prudent to use interpreters who meet the criteria of the suspect, victim or witness but who do not live within the immediate community. There is a potential risk that they may seek to influence the interview or account, or put pressure on the victim or witness to allow the matter to be dealt with within the local community or family rather than by the police.
- Interpreters should be allowed to interrupt the normal flow of the interview to ask the officer for repetition, clarification or to alert the officer to the possibility of a cultural inference that might have been assumed. Interruptions should be explained to all parties.

Charging

Checklist: File preparation

The CPS requires the following information, where applicable.

Evidence and offence details

- All relevant victim statements (including **withdrawal statements**, medical reports, and **victim personal statements (VPS)** – it is useful to obtain a further VPS later in the case to provide an update on how the offending has affected the victim, as some consequences are not immediately apparent and others have long-term impact).
- Previous convictions of all witnesses, including the victim.
- All relevant witness statements (including, for example, those of neighbours and children).
- Details of the victim's injuries (medical, photographic and written) – these should be as up to date as possible and draw attention to any pending test results which could reveal more serious injury, for example where there is too much swelling to see the injury initially but later tests show a break or fracture which would be relevant to level of charge.
- Description of the scene along with any photographic evidence or relevant statements, including those from the first officer at the scene.
- Audio or video recording of victim, witness and defendant interviews.
- Any photographic or CCTV evidence, or body-worn video (BWV) footage.
- Digital recordings of a 999 call.
- Any other case exhibits, for example mobile phone records or social media activity.
- Relevant police records, for example, pocket note book entries, risk assessments, incident logs, custody records.
- Any relevant records or statements from other agencies, for example pre-sentence reports from probation, damage reports to local authority or social housing departments, any information or views expressed by adult or children's services departments.
- Any evidence pending or not currently available to be included as part of the file, when available.

Officers should highlight aggravating factors of the offence such as:

- whether the suspect or defendant used a weapon
- whether the suspect or defendant planned the incident

Relationship – history and current

- History of the relationship, particularly if there has been violence or abuse in the past.
- Status of the victim's current relationship with the suspect/defendant and any future plans.

- Any indication that the relationship may involve controlling or coercive behaviour, even if it is not the offence being charged.
- Any past or current civil proceedings and civil orders.

Risk/bail

- Likelihood of the suspect or defendant offending again.
- Whether the suspect or defendant has made any threats before or since the incident.
- Evidence of the defendant or the defendant's relatives or associates contacting the victim since the incident or post charge.
- Location of the address of the victim and the suspect or defendant in relation to one another.
- Whether bail conditions apply.
- Whether the defendant is on licence and if so subject to what conditions (a copy of the licence should be included).
- Whether the defendant is currently subject to a suspended sentence.
- Whether the defendant is subject to any current civil orders (including DVPOs).
- Any previous breaches by the defendant of any of the above.

Suspect information and potential bad character evidence

- Any previous convictions.
- Offence details of any previous domestic abuse convictions or cautions.
- Crime reports from previous incidents including those against other victims.
- Details of incidents forming part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour which took place before 29 December 2015 (the commencement of the specific offence of controlling or coercive behaviour under [the Serious Crime Act 2015 s 76](#)).

Victim and witness care and safeguarding

- Details of any children of the family, including where they were during the incident and the impact of the domestic abuse upon them – comments made by very young children to police officers, the victim or other witnesses may be admissible as res gestae or hearsay.
- Effect on the relationship of continuing with the prosecution against the victim's wishes, and the victim's views on their own and their children's personal safety if a prosecution does or does not follow.
- Whether there is a need for an early special measures meeting with the CPS.
- Where applicable, which special measures would be available to assist a witness and why.

- Whether a registered intermediary is or should be involved.
- Whether an independent domestic violence adviser or other specialist service has supported the victim – they may be able to provide evidence of first disclosure or of the victim's fear if a prosecution based on hearsay evidence is being considered.

Interpreters

- Whether the defendant, victim or witness requires an interpreter and for which language.
- Names and details of any interpreters used during police interviews.
- Any requests by the defendant, victim or witness for an interpreter of the same sex or of a particular ethnic group, political orientation or affiliation.

Information required by the prosecutor to assess 'realistic prospect of conviction'

- Whether counter-allegations have been made.
- Any other information potentially relevant to the credibility of the victim in addition to a previous criminal record, for example previous complaints made or intelligence reports.

Checklist: Additional evidence to support the specific offence of controlling or coercive behaviour

All of the information set out in the checklist for file preparation is also relevant to the specific **offence of controlling or coercive behaviour** under **the Serious Crime Act 2015 s 76**.

In addition, officers should focus on establishing a pattern of behaviour across different types of evidence. Much of it will be evidence of the victim and perpetrator's day to day living and their interaction.

Types of evidence which may be useful include:

- records of communication between the victim and perpetrator, for example emails, phone records, text messages, social media
- audio or visual recordings of interaction between the victim and perpetrator, demonstrating body language and tone, for example 999 recordings, CCTV, BWV footage
- local enquiries, for example neighbours, regular deliveries, postal services, window cleaner

- witness testimony, for example from family and friends, as to observed behaviour by both parties and its effect and impact
- diaries kept by the victim and/or children
- records of lifestyle and household, including photographic evidence of the scene
- evidence of isolation, for example lack of contact with family and friends, withdrawal from social activities and clubs
- records of interaction with services which show the perpetrator adopting a dominant role, for example always accompanying the victim to banking or medical appointments
- bank records showing financial control
- medical records
- GPS tracking devices installed on mobile phones, tablets, vehicles
- care plan, where the perpetrator has caring responsibilities

These are not exhaustive and any evidence which shows a pattern of control or coercion is relevant.

Checklist: Evidence-led prosecution

Evidence to support a hearsay application

Where the victim has given an account in any form, but is unable to give live evidence for one of the reasons listed in [the CJA s 116\(2\)](#) of the CJA, evidence must be provided of the applicable reason in order to make a hearsay application, go to [prosecution based on hearsay evidence](#) for a complete list.

Where the victim is in fear:

- a section 9 statement from the victim setting out their fears
- attending officers recording relevant comments or behaviour at the scene in a pocket notebook
- body-worn video footage showing victim's fearful demeanour
- statements of third parties with direct knowledge of the victim's fears, for example friends, parents, neighbours, support workers
- bad character evidence which might reveal a significant background of domestic violence
- evidence of continuing fear through updates on the existence of fear as the trial approaches
- evidence that special measures will not adequately address the victim's fears

Where a victim cannot be traced:

- section 9 statement from the investigating officer detailing all 'reasonably practicable' steps they have taken to trace the victim and the outcome
- any associated exhibits

Where a victim is unfit to give evidence due to their physical or mental health condition:

- statements or reports from medical professionals with first-hand knowledge of the witness's unfitness and who are able to give a firm conclusion
- where mental state has deteriorated since giving the original statement, evidence from a mental health professional who can comment on fitness at the time the statement was taken
- evidence of any enquiries made into whether special measures could enable the victim to give evidence, for example video link

Further evidence when considering a prosecution based on hearsay

- Any comments made by a child from whom a formal statement cannot be taken but which have been recorded in an officer's section 9 statement or pocket notebook, in the statement of the victim or another witness or on body-worn video – these may be admissible as res gestae or as hearsay in the 'interests of justice' under the CJA s 114(1)(d).
- All information which may potentially impact on the credibility of the absent witness, for example the witness's previous convictions or cautions, previous complaints made by them or intelligence reports.
- All evidence capable of corroborating the victim's account.

Further evidence when considering a prosecution based on a hostile witness (who has made a subsequent conflicting statement which is believed to be false)

- All evidence that could corroborate the victim's initial account, for example evidence of injury, third party witness statements, body-worn video footage.
- All evidence that can rebut or disprove any aspect of the false account, for example an officer's statement which clearly says that the victim was not intoxicated at the time the initial account was given.
- Any evidence of motive for providing the false account.

Making bail decisions

Checklist: Pre-release considerations

Before a suspect is released from a police station officers should:

- inform the victim of the suspect's impending release, regardless of whether the suspect has been bailed or not, and record this notification
- check if the suspect is in possession of keys to the victim's house or car and remove them if so
- if the suspect offers a bail address with a previous or current partner, check not only that the person is happy for the suspect to be bailed there, but also that there is no history of domestic abuse – a curfew should never be imposed at an address where there is or has been domestic abuse
- update the [risk assessment](#) and [safety plan](#)
- ensure that all area control rooms and intelligence databases are updated regarding bail conditions, in case of future calls
- check if the suspect has a firearms or shotgun licence and consider conducting a licensing visit or withdrawing the licence in accordance with the [Home Office Guide on Firearms Licensing Law](#)
- make every effort to ensure that a suspect charged following a domestic abuse incident is placed before the court at the earliest opportunity, preferably before a [specialist domestic violence court \(SDVC\)](#), and that bail is for the shortest period that local service level agreements (SLAs) will allow ? this minimises the opportunities a suspect has to intimidate witnesses

Where a suspect is granted bail, they should be informed of the following points before they are released:

- it is the suspect's responsibility (not the victim's) to comply fully with any bail conditions
- any breaches of bail will be treated as such even if the suspect and/or victim state that they have reconciled or the victim has made contact with the suspect
- it is the CPS (not the victim) who makes decisions in relation to charging
- it is the CPS (not the victim) who makes decisions in relation to prosecution

Supervising officers should monitor the ways in which victims are updated about police bail decisions and decisions relating to charges, including where no charges are brought.

Partnership working

Checklist: Sharing evidence for family court hearings

When assisting family court hearings, police officers should:

- use the [2024 Disclosure of information between family And criminal agencies and jurisdictions](#) adopted by the CPS, the judiciary, police and local authorities.
- compile information promptly and comprehensively, as delays might lead to the family court postponing its decision relating to a child's future
- if there are current criminal proceedings, consult the CPS before passing information on to the family court
- provide police reports detailing incidents of domestic abuse that have come to police attention, particularly information relating to any children normally resident at the address and any observations made by attending officers
- provide relevant witness statements
- provide photographic or visually recorded evidence to the court, when available
- provide first accounts made by the officer attending the incident, including the seriousness and the effect of the incident upon the victim and any children

Support services and charities

- [National Domestic Violence Helpline \(Run by Refuge\)](#): 0808 2000 247
- All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline (Run by Welsh Women's Aid)
- [Live Fear Free Welsh Women's Aid](#): 0808 80 10 800
- [Refuge](#) operate a network of refuges and community-based support services across the country for women and children who need advocacy and support and a safe place to stay.
- [Women's Aid](#) support a network of specialist services. Specialist refuge and support services also exist for victims of domestic abuse who might experience additional barriers to reporting or escaping domestic abuse.
- The Women's Aid [Gold Book](#) can be accessed through a subscription service. Forces may wish to consider making this option available to officers.
- [The ManKind Initiative](#) has a directory of services for male victims called the Oak Book, which is available by contacting them.

- [The National Centre for Domestic Violence \(NCDV\)](#) helps with applying for emergency injunctions and is usually able to do so within 24 hours of first being contacted. See civil orders for further information. These services are means tested.
- [Rights of Women](#) provides advice about the law to women and have a family law [advice line](#) staffed by volunteer legal professionals.
- [Women's Aid](#) also provide useful links to legal advice.

For further information, go to:

- [CPS domestic abuse guidelines for prosecutors, annex E – National support organisations](#)

Tags

APP Domestic abuse