

High harm high frequency domestic abuse perpetrators

This research questioned whether current police demand-management systems distinguish a hierarchy of risk – with those who pose the highest risk at the top.

Key details

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| Lead institution | University of Liverpool |
| Principal researcher(s) | Prof Barry Godfrey and Dr Jane Richardson barry.godfrey@liverpool.ac.uk |
| Police region | North West |
| Collaboration and partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheshire Police • Merseyside Police • Sussex Police • Suffolk Constabulary • Essex Police |
| Level of research | Professional/work based |
| Project start date | July 2024 |

Research context

In 2021, HMICFRS asked forces in England and Wales to identify individuals who posed the highest risk to women and girls in that area, later reporting that they ‘were concerned that of the 40 individuals that the forces identified to us, 34 hadn’t already been recognised and managed by the force as their most prolific repeat offenders’ (HMICFRS, 2021). Moreover, over half of the 40 individuals had antecedent histories of offending against women and girls which had lasted for over 5 years without effective police strategies being in place. Clearly, the system of identifying and

managing perpetrators who pose the greatest risk to women and girls needed to be examined (Godfrey and Richardson, 2024).

Research methodology

This study adopts a methodology similar to that currently used in Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) ('Illuminating the past to make the future safer' (Mullane, 2017)). The guidance for conducting a DHR suggests that the background history of the victim and perpetrator should be included, together with a 'narrative chronology charting relevant key events/contact/involvement with the victim, the perpetrator and their families by agencies, professionals and others who have contributed to the DHR process' (Home Office, 2024).

Two police forces supplied data from Niche. Using this data, we constructed life-course 'vignettes' which placed incidents within a narrative chronology. The vignettes were analysed by researchers to explore whether people with similar offence profiles/trajectories appeared in demand-management lists, and then the vignettes were reviewed and commented on by experienced police officers to identify where and when opportunities for intervention existed.

Summary of findings

This project was completed in June 2026.

- Godfrey B and Richardson J. (2024). High harm, high frequency: Police strategies for managing serious domestic abuse perpetrators. University of Liverpool and N8 Research Partnership.

[Read report in the National Police Library](#)

Godfrey B, Richardson J and Waine N. (2025). 'High harm: Is it possible to identify strategic opportunities to reduce the re-offending of high-harm high-frequency (HHHF) domestic abuse perpetrators using current police systems?'. University of Liverpool and N8 Research Partnership.

References

Godfrey, BS and Richardson J., (2024). [The shift in focus from victims to the most serious perpetrators of domestic abuse](#). Criminology & Criminal Justice, volume 26, issue 1, pages

158–174.

HMICFRS. (2021). 'Police response to violence against women and girls: Final inspection report.'

Home Office. (2024). Domestic Homicide Review Statutory Guidance. Draft. May 2024.

Mullane F. (2017). 'The impact of family members' involvement in the domestic violence death review process.' In Dawson M (ed.), 'Domestic Homicides and Death Reviews: An International Perspective'. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pages 257–286.