

Police Research Series
Paper 100

Policing Domestic Violence: Effective Organisational Structures

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Policing and Reducing Crime Unit: Police Research Series

The Policing and Reducing Crime Unit (PRC Unit) was formed in 1998 as a result of the merger of the Police Research Group (PRG) and the Research and Statistics Directorate. The PRC Unit is now one part of the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate of the Home Office. The PRC Unit carries out and commissions research in the social and management sciences on policing and crime reduction, broadening the role that PRG played.

The PRC Unit has now combined PRG's two main series into the Police Research Series, continuing PRG's earlier work. This series will present research material on crime prevention and detection as well as police management and organisation issues.

Research commissioned by PRG will appear as a PRC Unit publication. Throughout the text there may be references to PRG and these now need to be understood as relating to the PRC Unit.

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Foreword

Since recommendations were made by HMIC in the early 1990s, most forces in England and Wales have either established specialist domestic violence units, or have employed specialist domestic violence officers in some other capacity. A considerable amount of work has been done looking at how police forces respond to and deal with victims and offenders in domestic violence incidents, but comparatively little research has addressed how forces are organised to deliver this service.

This is important as the type of organisation in place can ultimately affect the quality of service which forces provide when dealing with domestic violence. It also greatly affects the experience of those officers who work in this area, what their job entails and the degree to which they can provide a valuable service as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This report looks at the role of the specialist domestic violence officer, their location within force structures, the practices in place for monitoring performance, and the way in which information on incidents is communicated between officers. It will help forces identify good practice and areas for improvement in the types of organisational structure for dealing with domestic violence. It also provides information for other agencies to consider in improving service delivery in this important area.

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Executive summary

Previous work on domestic violence has tended to focus on either the nature of the police response to incidents, or victim support issues. This study seeks to add to knowledge of how the police are organised internally (i.e. the systems and structures in place) to provide a service dealing specifically with domestic violence incidents.

The study was undertaken in three phases between August 1997 and March 1998; 42 of the 43 forces in England and Wales participated.

The main areas investigated are organisational in nature. This organisation is important as it determines the extent to which forces can provide an efficient and effective service for dealing with domestic violence. Issues such as whether forces have specialist domestic violence officers (DVOs), the scope of their role, and their position within the force are examined as factors which affect service provision. Additional factors, such as how performance is monitored and how information is passed from front-line officers to specialist DVOs, are also identified as influential in determining both the nature of the response provided and the day-to-day work of the DVO.

The main findings were in the following areas:

- Wide variations were found in the scope and content of force policies on domestic violence. Definitions of domestic violence differed, making direct comparisons of performance difficult.
- Domestic incidents involving police officers, either as victims or offenders, presented problems for DVOs. Guidance on dealing with such issues was addressed in only one force.
- Ranges of organisational models for the delivery of a response to domestic violence were found. However, no single structure emerged as either more or less problematic than others. Problems related less to the structure than to the status of domestic violence work within forces and the level of commitment from headquarters and divisional commanders.
- Line management of DVOs was often blurred, leaving some specialist officers feeling isolated within the force structure.
- There was no standard model for the DVO role. A wide spectrum of activities was represented. DVOs often felt that the position was not sufficiently integrated

into mainstream policing and that too much of the responsibility for delivery of force policy had fallen on them personally.

- The study found little systematic performance monitoring of the role of the DVO.
- Standards of performance monitoring were generally poor, both for patterns of offending behaviour and quality of police response. Even where statistics were collected, they were little used. There was little attempt to monitor the quality of service provided to victims or the effectiveness with which the different police functions worked together, even though DVOs reported that most problems occurred at these interfaces.
- Forces lacked a systematic approach to the management of information relating to domestic violence incidents, leading to under-counting of them. DVOs spent excessive amounts of their time seeking information rather than responding to it.
- Information about previous incidents at the address, or about domestic violence 'markers' on the command and control system, were not routinely passed on to responding officers.
- DVO records were seldom accessible by other officers which undermined their general intelligence potential.
- Domestic violence was not included in the indicators used by most forces to measure performance, contributing to the perceived low status of this area of police work.
- Despite close links between the two areas, domestic violence and child protection indices were rarely integrated.
- DVOs in some areas were left to exercise their own judgement about whether to tell social workers about children in households where domestic violence incidents were reported. The criteria for referral were seldom incorporated into inter-agency agreements.
- The Home Office key performance indicator on repeat victimisation emphasises the importance of addressing this issue as an integral part of a force crime reduction strategy and is clearly relevant to domestic violence. Repeat victimisation is, to some degree, currently monitored by 60% of forces, although there was widespread concern about the extent to which current systems could

accurately and quickly identify repeat incidents. The term 'repeat victimisation' was interpreted in different ways.

- Training on domestic violence should be both systematic and targeted appropriately at both junior officers and senior officers with a key role in the force's response to domestic violence. However, coherent training strategies were not in place. Much of the training had been developed on an ad hoc basis.

On the basis of these key findings, a series of recommendations has been drawn up for consideration by the Home Office, force headquarters, divisional commanders and HMIC. These are contained in section 9 of the report.

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1. Introduction

Background

In the last decade, the police response to domestic violence incidents has come under increasing criticism. Common criticisms were that incidents were not being taken seriously and were seen as civil rather than criminal matters and that inadequate recording practices obscured a true picture of the extent of domestic violence¹.

¹ See Edwards, 1986; Smith, 1989; Morley and Mullender, 1994.

During the early 1990s, the Home Office, together with the police service, introduced measures to respond to these criticisms. Home Office Circular 60/1990 emphasised the need for:

- policy documents and clear strategies for dealing with domestic violence incidents;
- an interventionist approach based on the presumption of arrest when an offence has been committed;
- a recording process for 'domestic' incidents which reflects procedures for other violent crimes; and
- the establishment of dedicated units or specialist officers to deal with domestic violence incidents.

Five years later, Grace (1995) noted that although most forces had introduced policies to deal with these needs, the translation of policy into practice had been less successful.

Whereas previous work has focused on the nature and effectiveness of the policing response and victim support, Grace raised issues relating the effective policing of domestic violence incidents to internal force structures, procedures and resourcing provisions. In most areas, the police service was found wanting. This study focuses on these internal force structures and procedures.

Aims

This study aimed to:

- identify the range and respective strengths and weaknesses of the various organisational structures and processes for responding to domestic violence in place in different forces; and
- consider the extent to which forces adopt different roles in respect to policing domestic violence.

INTRODUCTION

The specific issues examined during the study were:

- the manner in which domestic violence was addressed in force policy documents;
- the range of organisational structures adopted and their perceived effectiveness;
- the nature and scope of the role of specialist domestic violence officers and their line management;
- information management, including communication between different parts of the force;
- the use of monitoring; and
- the provision of training.

Methodology

42 of the 43 forces in England and Wales participated in the study which was undertaken in 3 phases between August 1997 and March 1998.² The first phase consisted of a national survey of force organisational structures, data recording, and training and multi-agency work. Copies of force policies and other relevant documentation were also collected.

² One force felt unable to participate due to the small size of its resident population.

The second phase focused on all participating forces. Interviews were held with:

- 41 officers responsible for domestic violence policy;
- 40 line managers; and
- 83 operational officers dealing with domestic violence on a daily basis.

Of the 83 operational officers:

- 15 (18%) had been in the post for less than one year;
- 56 (68%) had been in post for between one and three years; and
- 12 (14%) had been in post for longer.

The third phase consisted of visits to five police forces, each with a different organisational approach. Interviews were conducted in a total of 12 divisions, seven control rooms and, where appropriate, with headquarters personnel. A total of 54 interviews were conducted with commanders or members of the command team, DVOs, child protection officers, line managers, control room supervisors and uniform patrol officers.

Structure of the report

The structure of this report reflects the focus on internal arrangements and their effectiveness:

- Section 2 describes the content and scope of force policy documents dealing with domestic violence.
- Section 3 discusses the role of specialist domestic violence officers, including how their scope differs between forces.
- Section 4 deals with the different organisational models adopted by forces in response to domestic violence and presents the views of interviewees as to their effectiveness.
- Section 5 looks at the recording and accessing of information on domestic violence incidents.
- Section 6 concerns the use of statistics and performance indicators to monitor the quality of the domestic violence response.
- Section 7 looks at training issues.
- Section 8 draws conclusions from the study findings.
- Section 9 presents a series of recommendations for consideration by the Home Office, HMIC, force headquarters and divisional commanders.

Terminology

Terms used to describe the major geographical and administrative subdivisions within police forces vary greatly, e.g. 'basic command units', 'divisions' and 'areas'. In the interests of consistency, this report refers throughout to divisions.

The term 'operational officer' is used to denote those nominated by their force to discuss the day-to-day approach to policing domestic violence. Most were specialists in dealing with domestic violence. In this report we have called these specialists domestic violence officers (DVOs), even though these words were not always included in their job title. Where appropriate, the report distinguishes the responses of DVOs from those of general operational officers.

2. Police policies on domestic violence

Policy statements play an important role in ensuring coherence of approach by different units within the force to domestic violence, particularly in respect of when cases should be referred to specialist officers. This section examines:

- the extent to which policy statements have been introduced by police forces;
- their content; and
- the extent of variations which exist between these documents.

The definition of domestic violence

In 1993 the Home Affairs Committee defined domestic violence as “any form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse which takes place within the context of a close relationship. In most cases, the relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, or otherwise) or ex-partners”. Domestic violence is not a legally-defined offence and the police are not currently required to identify separately domestic violence incidents in their statistical returns to the Home Office.

Scottish HMIC (1997) has recommended that a standard definition be adopted which, for the most part, reflects the 1993 HAC definition, but also includes the requirement to maintain separate records on domestic violence incidents.³

The majority of definitions of domestic violence adopted by forces were based on that used by the Home Affairs Committee. However, variations did occur. The key ones included:

- relationships described: 10 forces (24%) specified that the definition applied irrespective of the genders of the offender or victim;
- behaviour defined: a few forces had adopted a relatively narrow definition of behaviour focusing on physical violence; and
- the range of offences recorded as domestic violence: some forces included damage to property.

Research has shown domestic violence to be an ongoing crime which persists over time and has stressed the importance of identifying repeat incidents. Only nine forces, however, referred to repeat victimisation in their policies and only one included a working definition of repeat victimisation.

Policies did not always make the link between domestic violence, rates of violent crime and homicide. Eight force policies (19%) contained information about the response to domestic violence involving ethnic minorities.

³ “For police recording purposes domestic violence is any form of physical, sexual or emotional abuse which takes place within the context of a close relationship between adults. In most cases the relationship will be between partners who are married, cohabiting or separated. Records will be maintained to differentiate between non-sexual crimes of violence, sexual offences and other crimes (such as breach of the peace, threats and vandalism) and abuse which does not amount to crime. Each record will also show the extent of repeat victimisation, and will be updated to show arrest/detention, report for summons/warrant, and any other outcome.” HMIC for Scotland (1997).

Policy documents

38 forces (90%) had a domestic violence policy document. Thirty five of these also had established written aims and priorities. Of the four forces with no policy document, these aims and priorities were set out in other documents produced by the force.

There were deficiencies in the configuration control of policy documents: most policies were dated 1996 or 1997, but four were between two and six years old and 14 were undated. Quality control procedures such as recording the date and issue number on every page, prescribed distribution and regular updating were not in place in the majority of forces. Policies in 26 forces (62%) were under review or being amended, particularly in light of legislative changes in the Protection from Harassment Act and Part IV of the Family Law Act. Several forces produced a version of their policy for publication, often in consultation with other members of their multi-agency domestic violence forum.

Wide variation was identified in the scope and content of domestic violence policy statements examined. No common structure was identified, nor was a standard checklist of matters addressed.⁴ A typical policy document included information on:

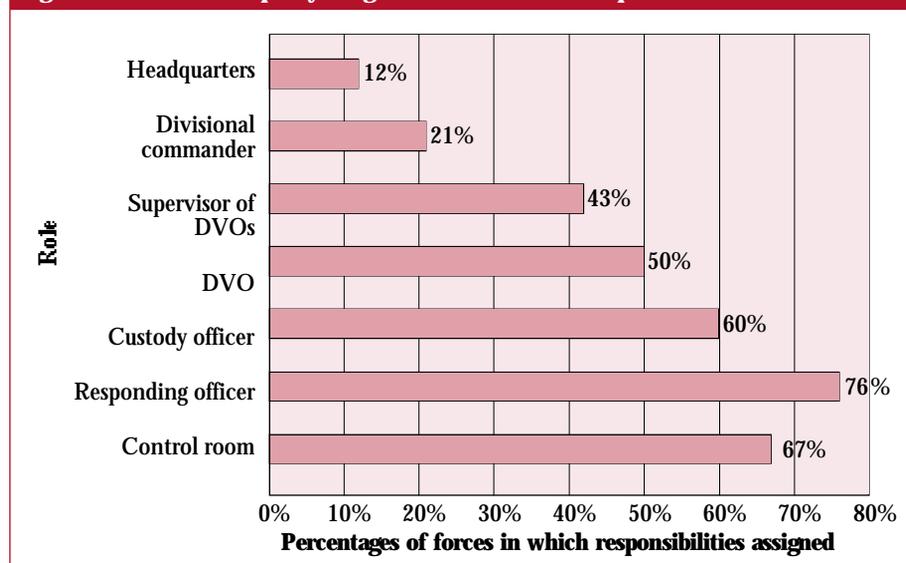
- a definition of domestic violence;
- the implications of domestic violence; and
- guidance about the various components of the police response.

Reflecting the emphasis in Home Office Circular 60/90 on the use and value of powers of arrest, 40 (95%) forces also specifically mentioned the need for positive action and the presumption of arrest.

Responsibility for implementation of domestic violence policy is shared across a range of police functions. This was recognised to a limited extent in force policies, as illustrated in Figure 1.

4 In the United States, efforts are being made to produce a model policy on domestic violence, initially at the state level and then nationally, to ensure the delivery of 'uniform and consistent services' e.g. Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, 1997.

Figure 1: Forces whose policy assigns domestic violence responsibilities to roles



Domestic incidents involving police officers

The involvement of police officers or police support staff in domestic incidents, either as offenders or victims, was of concern to DVOs. Each of the five fieldwork forces had dealt with such incidents. Nationally, only one force policy referred specifically to domestic incidents involving officers as perpetrators. DVOs said that they would welcome guidance on complaints of this type and appropriate disciplinary procedures. Such guidelines would need to include:

- standard procedures for notification of senior officers when an alleged offence by a police officer has been reported;
- investigation procedures, e.g. some divisions assigned a DVO and investigator from elsewhere in the force if one of their own officers was involved;
- a clear message from Chief Constables to the police service and the public that domestic violence from officers would not be tolerated, and
- security provisions to ensure the integrity of any investigations and the privacy of the complainant.⁵

⁵ For example, one DV office had installed security locks after an officer was found going through records trying to find his wife's address.

One commander said that it was an issue “rife with examples of surprisingly bad policing”.

3. The role of the specialist domestic violence officer

This section looks in greater detail at key features of the specialist domestic violence officer role. Forces have, in the past, been recommended to employ officers who have a special responsibility for handling domestic violence offences. (Home Office Circular 60/1990). Even where forces have chosen to have specialist DVOs, the nature and scope of their duties vary. The section also examines selection procedures, the relationship between DVOs and their line managers and the stress associated with the job.

The need for specialists

Forces have previously been encouraged to set up 'dedicated' units specialising in domestic violence (Home Office Circular 60/1990). This message was reinforced in subsequent research findings (Grace, 1995). Nevertheless, six (14%) of the 42 forces had no officers specialising in domestic violence and a further 18 (43%) did not have a dedicated unit. In seven forces with a specialist unit, officers had other duties in addition to domestic violence. The majority of forces (86%) were found by the present study to have specialist DVOs.

Several forces without DVOs were considering the need for specialists. The increasing need to have a focal point for inter-agency work and for someone able to advise victims and other officers in respect of new legislation were particular pressures. Notwithstanding these pressures, one force said that it had rejected the appointment of DVOs on the basis that it would undermine the role of the patrol officer responding to domestic incidents and become an excuse to pass on problems which responding officers should properly address themselves. Many DVOs supported these concerns, arguing that they were often overloaded and that the nature of their work was not understood by colleagues who used them as a 'dumping ground'. The emphasis on working with victims sometimes branded DVOs as 'glorified social workers' and because the domestic violence response was not seen as a key factor in the force's overall performance, it had a low priority when assigning resources.

Profile of domestic violence officers

Of the 42 forces surveyed:

- 36 had appointed officers with special responsibility for domestic violence, an increase of almost 100% since Grace's 1995 study.

Of these 36:

- 18 DVOs were based in a domestic violence unit. In seven of these, officers had

- other duties in addition to domestic violence, and
- 18 DVOs were not based in a dedicated unit.

Little pattern was evident in the numbers of specialist DVOs operating within any one force. The number of households served by a single DVO ranged from 2,000 to 286,000. Even forces within the same 'family' (grouping together those with similar characteristics) differed dramatically in the number of households per DVO. In nine forces (25%) the number of DVO staff had been decided by headquarters while in the others the decision had been devolved to divisions. Policy interviewees revealed that only five forces had attempted to match DVO staffing levels to demand.

In 12 forces, a third of those with DVOs, all were women, while in all but two of the remaining forces, women DVOs outnumbered their male colleagues. Nine forces had DVOs of ethnic minority background.

Nature and scope of the DVO role

Of the 71 DVOs interviewed, 65 (92%) were employed to deal with domestic violence incidents on a full-time basis.

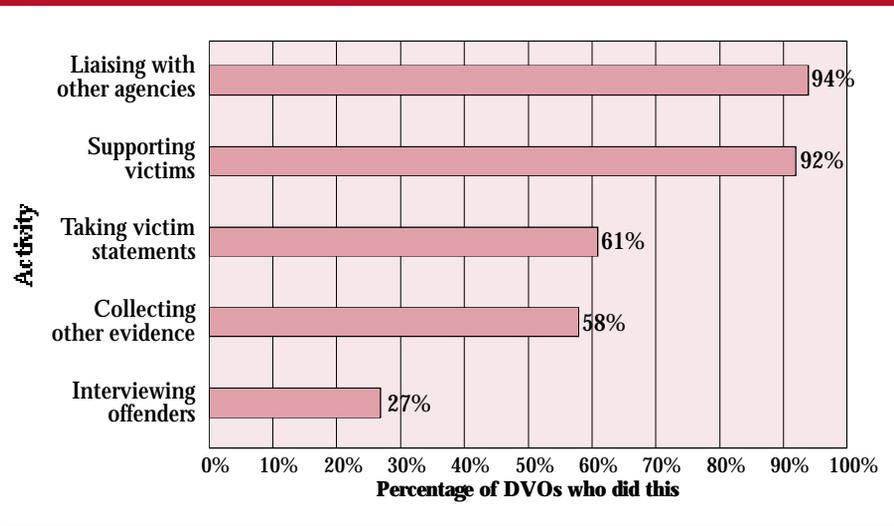
For 37 DVOs (52%) domestic violence was their only responsibility. The duties of 16 of the other 34 DVOs included child protection, while the remaining 18 DVOs also had responsibilities in areas such as victim support, missing persons, community liaison and racial incidents. Eleven of the DVOs with other duties spent less than a quarter of their time on domestic violence duties. Even DVOs who had no duties other than domestic violence were sometimes seconded to other tasks. One in three of all DVOs said they felt under pressure to undertake other duties at the expense of their domestic violence work.

Job description

The domestic violence tasks that DVOs undertook varied widely between and sometimes even within forces. Sixty-two (87%) of the DVOs interviewed had a written job description but 34 (55% of the 62) of these said it was not an accurate reflection of what they did.

Figure 2 shows the range of activities undertaken by DVOs and the extent to which they occurred.

Figure 2: Activities undertaken by DVOs



In some instances the job description was in direct conflict with the service provided. As one officer commented, “we’re told not to counsel but that’s exactly what we do”. This disparity between job description and practice contributed to a feeling expressed by many DVOs that senior officers understood little about the nature of their role. It also meant that the service provided often lacked focus or predictability and this in turn made it hard to monitor or co-ordinate.

In addition to attending meetings of their local domestic violence forum, DVOs spent much of their time liaising with other agencies. This was seen as important for increasing understanding of the police role and encouraging the commitment of agency resources to victims. In some areas DVOs felt that too much of the burden for promoting local initiatives fell on them. In one location visited during fieldwork, an attempt had been made to separate out those aspects of the job which required a police officer’s involvement, with a civilian employee carrying out some of the telephone victim support and inter-agency work.

Administrative tasks also encroached on the time available to perform general functions. Thirty eight percent of DVOs claimed they spent more than half their

time on administration. In particular, they quoted trawling command and control systems for missed cases, 'chasing' patrol officers for referral forms which had not been submitted and updating their own records. Forty-two DVOs (59%) said that administrative duties constrained their ability to provide an effective domestic violence response.

Some DVOs did not initiate contact with victims. For others the approach made to victims was ad hoc. The majority gave priority to repeat victims and those who had suffered serious assaults. Views differed as to whether letters should be sent after the first reported incident or whether a letter was ever an appropriate form of contact, as it might be opened by the offender. When DVOs were under particular pressure, making contact with victims sometimes assumed a lower priority.

The investigative role

Bridgeman and Hobbs (1997) argued that the work of the DVO should be integrated with other aspects of the response to domestic violence, involving detection, crime prevention and provision for victims "working together to one end".

In 16 forces (38% of those surveyed), at least one DVO interviewed acted as officer in charge of the investigation and interviewed offenders in more serious domestic violence cases.

The benefits were seen to be:

- more prosecutions;
- fewer cases being withdrawn by victims after the complaint was made; and
- a more positive status within the force for the DVO role.

One commander considered that it was more effective to place investigation and support in the same unit; an added benefit was that "intelligence flows more quickly into the mainstream".

However, most DVOs described themselves as playing no part in any investigation following the report of an incident. Only two line managers said they sought investigative skills when selecting candidates for the DVO role.

Thirteen DVOs (18%) were detectives although not all had received formal CID training. Only seven interviewees with policy responsibility (17%) thought that DVOs needed to be detectives, but 17 (41%) thought they should have more of an investigative role. However, they pointed out the resource implications because most

DVOs had difficulty in keeping up with the volume of work they already had. One quarter of the 52 DVOs who did not interview alleged offenders wished to do so. Not all DVOs were convinced of the benefits of involvement in investigations. Several were concerned that a conflict of interest would be created between investigation and victim support. Problems in liaising with investigating officers were reported by 30 (36%) of DVOs. This was particularly the case with CID officers who were sometimes unaware of the DVO role. One force had avoided these problems, while successfully achieving convictions, by having two kinds of DVO:

- an investigator who worked force-wide targeting serious repeat offenders, and
- others assigned to divisions who concentrated on working with victims.

This approach was thought to have been more successful in achieving convictions. Interviewees noted that child protection officers had become increasingly involved in the interviewing of offenders and thought that the development of the investigative role of DVOs should be formally evaluated.

Stress associated with the DVO role

Working directly with victims of crime is acknowledged to be stressful. The findings from this research reinforces this view. Several DVOs interviewed in the course of the study had had an extended absence due to stress and some nominated for interview were unavailable for this reason. Forces visited during fieldwork were only just beginning to monitor sick leave for DVOs. Interviewees suggested that rates of overtime should also be monitored as an indicator of overload.

Previous Home Office research recommended that ‘ideally’ two DVOs should work together (Grace, 1995). A few DVOs were assisted by a civilian employee or by another officer on attachment for a period of months. However, only 12 DVOs (17%) said that someone else undertook their domestic violence duties in their absence. Most felt a great sense of frustration and thought that too much of the burden of implementing force policy on domestic violence had fallen on them. One commented, “we all do our own thing in this position. Nobody would have a clue if I was doing nothing. As it is, I’m tearing my hair out.”

Those DVOs who worked alone, with little or no cover for their absence, reported an increased sense of isolation and frustration. For example, one DVO working on her own pointed out, “In most police work, we work in pairs. Here, if I’ve got a tough job on, only I know about it.” The often distressing nature of the work, a perceived lack of senior level commitment to dealing with domestic violence incidents, and a general suspicion of counselling services were also mentioned as

contributory factors to this sense of isolation.

Only three (4%) of the 71 DVOs interviewed said unreservedly that domestic violence work was valued within their force. This lack of a sense of value was thought to contribute to the frustration and stress experienced by DVOs, as the following quotes illustrate:

“There is no credibility in dealing with domestic violence as far as my colleagues are concerned... the uniformed officers just don’t want to get involved”;

“The work we do is undervalued and nobody listens to us. As PCs, we have no clout”;

“I talk at divisional meetings to inspector rank and below to raise awareness of domestic violence. I still get comments like *didn’t you used to be a policeman?*”.

While it was not expected that senior officers would necessarily have an in-depth knowledge of the day-to-day duties of the DVO, it was felt that they should at least be strongly committed to dealing with domestic violence incidents. There was some scepticism about the degree to which this occurred. One DVO observed that, “the Chief Constable’s policy sounds great but it just isn’t happening in practice”. Another felt that, “the people who develop policy ignore the importance of the attitude of senior ranks. Nothing will change without their commitment.”

Forty-eight DVOs (68%) said they had access to the force’s counselling service, and a further 11 (16%) had access to a special support service. Perhaps as a result of this, only 20 (28%) felt that targeted counselling was needed for those in the DVO role. Nevertheless, many DVOs referred to the fact that the stigma associated with seeking counselling still persisted in police culture and many believed that a request for counselling might adversely affect their subsequent careers. One suggested solution was to make attendance at counselling sessions mandatory. This was being implemented in seven (10%) forces.

Fifty-three DVOs (75%) said they had the opportunity to exchange ideas with other DVOs within the force and 22 (31%) were in communication with DVOs in other forces. Fifty-nine (83%) thought that such contacts were, or would be, valuable.

Selection of DVOs

Managers described the requirements of the DVO role as including:

- inter-personal skills (empathy, compassion and being a good listener);
- communication skills; and

- the ability to work in a multi-agency setting.

DVOs had to be able to:

- work unsupervised and under pressure;
- prioritise;
- cope with stress, the frustrations of the role and grief-ridden work; and
- challenge the system.

Managers variously described desirable DVO characteristics as including being self-motivated; open-minded yet strong-minded; and flexible. It was important that they had a good health record without long absences for illness.

The emphasis on inter-personal skills may be linked to the perceived low status of domestic violence work within the force. The qualities identified as needed by DVOs all involved direct work with victims. Similar emphasis was not placed on understanding of civil and criminal legislation and the relationship between the two. Similarly, no manager mentioned the need for DVOs to have training skills as a trainer even though this accounted for a significant proportion of some DVOs' time. One in three of the DVOs interviewed had previously worked in child protection. However, child protection experience was considered important in selecting DVOs by only two line managers.

Managers and DVOs said that there could be problems in persuading candidates to come forward for selection and one in three line managers said they had difficulty in finding staff of the right calibre to become DVOs. Most forces followed the usual police procedure of advertising DVO posts and selecting applicants through interview boards. Despite the fact that two-thirds of line managers were actively involved in the selection process, some DVOs complained that members of interview boards often lacked an understanding of their function.

Relationship between DVOs and their line managers

The majority of DVOs and line managers identified problems with line management arrangements. Of the 40 line managers interviewed, 24 (60%) had a written job description of their domestic violence responsibilities but only 15 (38%) thought that it was an accurate picture of their actual duties. Sixteen (40%) had received training in domestic violence. Although over half of those questioned felt adequately supported by their own line managers in respect of their domestic violence role, a considerable number thought there was no clear management structure or interest for upward reporting of problems on this issue.

All but one of the line managers were responsible for other functions as well as domestic violence and for 23 (58%) the other functions included child protection which, it was universally accepted, needed to be given priority. Twelve line managers (30%) said they were called upon to resolve conflicts between the demands of domestic violence and other duties. Only 13 line managers (33%) said that they had sufficient time to carry out their domestic violence management responsibilities.

DVOs also voiced reservations about line management arrangements. Only 29 (41%) felt that the support they received from their line manager was adequate. Common complaints were:

- insufficient contact with managers who were often based in a different location;
- lack of management understanding of the domestic violence role; and
- failure to monitor caseloads, overtime and the amount of administrative work.

Many DVOs said that their line managers did not back them up in applications for resources, such as personal computers, which were becoming increasingly necessary to perform the role efficiently and effectively. One pointed out that she was expected to send letters to victims but did not have access to a word-processor. In another force the updating of a computerised cardbox system had been abandoned because of lack of administrative support.

The lack of clear lines of management responsibility for domestic violence led some DVOs who had little contact with line managers to take their problems directly to members of the command team. This generates its own problems: one sergeant commented, "I find myself being sidelined when then this happens but members of this unit are experts in their field and I am not trained".

Line management strategies

Table 1 shows the range of ways in which line managers in 36 forces were monitoring the performance of DVOs.

Technique	Number who used (%)
Through the appraisal mechanism	13 (36%)
Direct observation of DVOs at work	9 (25%)
Dip-sampling paperwork produced by DVOs	4 (11%)
No monitoring undertaken	4 (11%)
Systematic monitoring undertaken ⁽¹⁾	3 (8%)
Holding regular meetings with staff	2 (6%)
Using repeat victimisation figures	1 (3%)
Total	36 (100%)

⁽¹⁾ Of the three respondents who adopted a systematic approach, one talked of personal performance indicators, one referred to personal development plans relating to monthly performance indicators set for each division, while the third used performance and development reviews centred on 90-day plans which included performance targets.

Management support

The success of a specialist response was seen to depend more on the quality of management than on where the function lies within the organisation. It was felt that managers needed to:

- be involved in and committed to delivering a quality domestic violence response;
- be willing to fight for an adequate share of limited resources;
- be prepared to support their staff in resolving problems at the interface with other police functions; and
- be underpinned by commitment up the chain of command to the highest levels within the force.

These commitments should then be manifest in policy, training and performance monitoring, including a headquarters responsibility to monitor variations in performance throughout the force area. Without such commitment, the specialist function can become marginalised and isolated. This impacts operational effectiveness, lowers morale and results in a low status for the specialist DVO role in the eyes of fellow officers.

The majority of DVOs spoke of their need for a higher level of interest and support from managers. This was particularly important when they reported the poor practice of patrol officers, custody officers or control room staff.

To deal with the difficulties caused by lack of management involvement and sometimes geographical separation from managers, many DVOs had developed 'coping strategies' and alternative sources of support within and outside the force. Lack of supervision sometimes led to patterns of working that were not reflected in DVOs' job descriptions. This made managing and monitoring their work even more difficult which in turn increased their sense of isolation, thereby perpetuating the problems.

4. Force organisational structures

The research identified many different organisational approaches to domestic violence. This section examines the range of structures, their relative effectiveness, and the respective responsibilities of headquarters and divisions. The discussion draws on interviewees' perceptions of the domestic violence structure chosen by their force, their assessment of the problems encountered and suggestions for improvement. Organisational structures relating to domestic violence are compared with those relating to child protection.

Deployment of specialist officers

The location of domestic violence units and specialist DVOs within the force structure varied. This in part reflected recent organisational changes in the police service such as the introduction of local policing plans, moves towards sector policing and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 with its focus on partnerships with local authorities. The cumulative effect of these changes has been to emphasise the devolution of management and budgetary responsibility to divisional and sub-divisional levels. Tension between central and local control often meant that there was no obvious or consistent 'home' for DVOs within force structures:

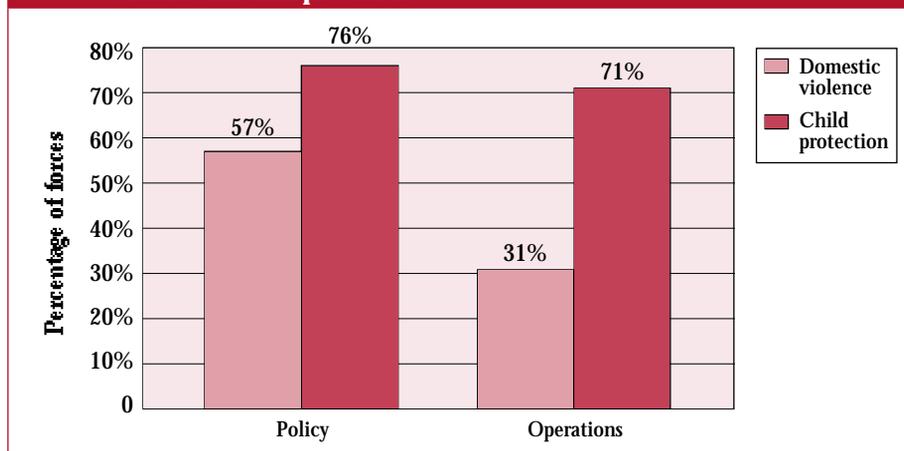
- 17 forces (47% of those with specialists) had DVOs located on divisions;
- 16 forces (44% of those with specialists) divided DVOs between headquarters and divisions; and
- three forces had DVO positions filled exclusively by headquarters personnel.

DVOs were not always deployed in a consistent way within forces, sometimes because of differing approaches among local authority areas. DVOs and DVO managers were sometimes stationed in different locations. Divisions within forces had occasionally decided to locate DVOs in different departments. As one DVO commented, "I'm in a uniform support role at the moment within Crime and Partnership. The post is shifting to come within the CID allocation, even though I'm not involved in investigations, but my line manager will still be in Crime and Partnership."

Organisational comparisons with child protection

It is useful to compare the organisational response to child protection and domestic violence because of the overlap between such incidents. Figure 3 shows the extent to which CID had responsibility for both policy and operations in these areas.

Figure 3: Percentage of forces in which CID has a responsibility for domestic violence and child protection



Also, in contrast to domestic violence, forces were more likely to retain central responsibility for the management of child protection.⁶

⁶ “CPUs provide a consistent force endorsement of the inter-agency approach to child protection... the need for specialised facilities and training, and also for routine liaison with local authorities, has meant that centralisation has been the main option considered”. (Morgan, McCulloch and Burrows, 1995)

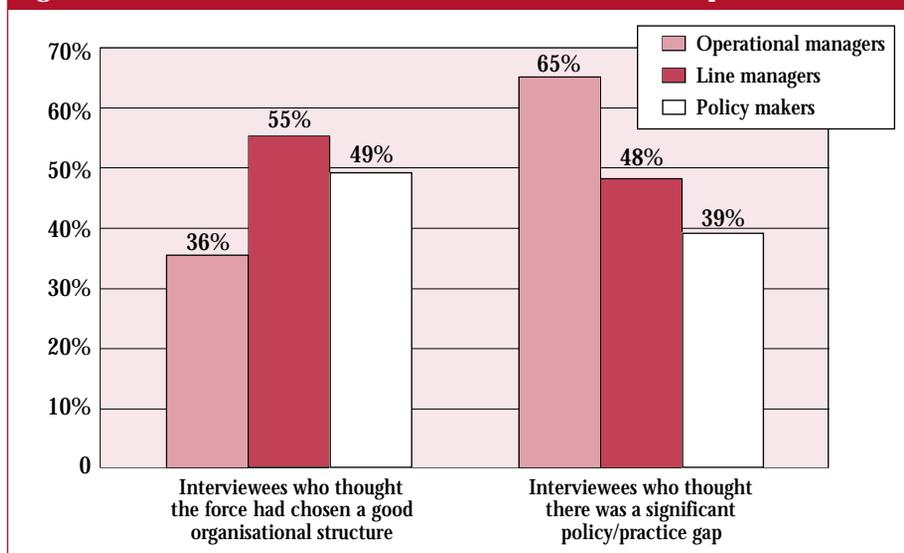
This study highlighted a number of issues to be contemplated by forces considering whether to link child protection work with domestic violence responsibilities. It confirmed the advantages and disadvantages identified by previous research of placing DVOs and child protection officers together organisationally (Grace, 1995). Although information sharing improved, problems were reported due to the higher priority given to child protection work.

Thirty-five DVOs (49% of the 71 interviewed) were managed by a supervisor who was also responsible for child protection. Line managers who supervised child protection were less likely to feel they had enough time to carry out their domestic violence responsibilities compared with other line managers. DVOs who had other duties were more likely to feel under pressure to take on work other than domestic violence if their line managers also managed child protection.

Perceptions of effectiveness

Perceptions varied widely amongst policy makers, line managers and operational officers as to the effectiveness of force organisational structures and the ability to deliver in practice the aims set out in policy statements. These differences are illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Interviewees' views on domestic violence structure and response



Structural problems

There was no correlation between the type of structure chosen by the force and its perceived effectiveness. Irrespective of the type of force structure in which they served, many interviewees described a management vacuum in which lines of accountability for the domestic violence response were blurred or did not exist. Operational officers were least convinced on the appropriateness of the structures in place. Two forces with DVOs were unable to nominate anyone in a line management position to be interviewed. Managers with whom interviews were conducted acknowledged doing little or no supervision, for example, “The DVU really runs itself.”

Confusion between the management responsibilities of headquarters and divisional personnel further compounded problems. In one force, a headquarters inspector said, “I act as the DVOs’ line manager but a sergeant on division is their line manager”. The detective sergeant in question acknowledged, “the inspector at headquarters knows more about what they do but he is not their boss”.

Those who felt that their force had not selected the right structure were asked to describe the problems it presented and to suggest improvements. Officers at all

levels spoke of the need to integrate the domestic violence response with mainstream policing and to move away from the view that it was 'second class crime' if it was treated as crime at all. However, many thought that their force's organisational structure prevented such integration by marginalising those responsible for the domestic violence response. The feeling of isolation felt by many DVOs was apparent in comments such as, "I have no-one to take problems to" and "no-one in this force owns domestic violence".

Although most force policies referred to the need for a consistent level of response across the force to victims of domestic violence, over 60% of policy interviewees acknowledged that differences existed. For example: "the force approach is fragmented and controlled by division"; "the front-line approach varies, because divisional managers are inconsistent"; and "the domestic violence staff are divisional so the response varies. They've lost their way." Inconsistency of approach was mostly attributed to differences in attitude and commitment of individual divisional commanders. Only one interviewee said the variation in response reflected differences in local need.

There was a degree of scepticism about the commitment of headquarters to dealing with problems in the service delivery at a local level. One officer commented, "Headquarters is a eunuch without the wherewithal or will to do more than give broad guidance, but this means that divisions are having to re-invent the wheel. When personnel move across divisions, they find that roles and functions vary widely."

Another took the view that the pendulum had swung too far in the direction of devolution: "Some of the agencies we deal with cross divisional boundaries, and they find themselves dealing with different policies. Headquarters devolution has gone too far; the genie is out of the bottle."

Others felt that some inconsistency was unavoidable: "Much of the time we don't apply a force-wide policy. If you are in partnership with your local authorities, you have to pay attention to them. In this division we have to tailor our response to two authorities whose approach is very different."

The majority of interviewees at all force levels wanted to see an increased role for headquarters. Specific requests were for headquarters to:

- provide more direction;
- monitor domestic violence; and
- manage DVOs.

Some command team members and managers expressed frustration at headquarters' failure to provide guidance. For instance, "We have asked headquarters to help [with crime analysis] but they have just said to do whatever we need." One was even more outspoken: "Under devolution, the force no longer speaks with one voice on domestic violence. Headquarters should decide on the road and the minimum speed to move forward. As it is, we're all going in different directions."

Precise strategies for achieving consistency were unclear. Whilst some policy officers met DVOs on a regular basis, the DVOs' line managers were not always given the opportunity to meet together across divisions. Only six policy officers undertook active monitoring of some kind, usually through scrutiny of forms or statistical returns. Others were even more vague as to their approach, which they described as "influencing autonomous district commanders", "raising awareness with other agencies", and "stepping in where difficulties arise".

Organisational structures: best practice

Whilst no single organisational structure emerged from the research as superior to all others, DVOs identified a number of factors which were considered to benefit operational effectiveness:

- a strong headquarters role in setting policy and monitoring practice;
- separate line management of DVOs and child protection officers where this is necessary to ensure that domestic violence work is not subordinated to child protection;
- a vertical management structure extending to the highest levels within the force;
- the location of DVOs and child protection officers in the same or adjoining offices to facilitate the sharing of information;
- location of the DVO manager on the same site as the DVOs;
- domestic violence training for the DVO manager;
- opportunities for exchanging ideas with other DVOs within the force and externally;
- DVOs working in pairs for support and back up;
- monitoring of stress indicators such as turnover, sickness and hours of working; and
- administrative support and computerised record-keeping for DVOs.

Key factors concerning the location of DVOs included co-location with child protection officers and ease of access to operational officers and detectives. Many DVOs favoured being located in a police station but a minority felt that work with victims was facilitated by being located elsewhere.

5. Information management

⁷ These factors were emphasised in Home Office Circular 60/1990.

Key factors in an effective response to domestic violence include comprehensive record-keeping on domestic incidents and ease of information retrieval.⁷ However, police information systems have developed in a fragmented way and many forces are only in the early stages of developing a more integrated approach. As a result, although police records often contain information about previous incidents at the same address or involving the same family, this is not always readily accessible to responding officers. This section highlights the lack of a systematic approach to information needs and information sharing practices.

Command and control systems

Responding appropriately

Command and control systems have the potential to hold, provide and relay a variety of useful information, for example:

- coding of domestic incidents;
- information about previous domestic incidents at an address, which can subsequently be passed to responding officers;
- referral of domestic incidents to DVOs; and
- information about children.

Emergency calls are dealt with by police command and control rooms. Their primary function is to serve the public and allocate police resources through 'demand management'. Calls are given a priority allocation linked to a target response time. Although control room staff acknowledged that domestic incidents should generally be given a high priority, in some of the forces visited, DVOs were concerned that a small proportion of calls were disposed of by telephone operators in ways contrary to force policy. In one of the worst examples, a caller from a hospital casualty unit had been told that a domestic incident "was not a police matter".

There was also some evidence that those responding to calls had not followed them up in an appropriate way. For example, an operator following up a failed '999' call accepted the reassurance of a man at the other end of the phone that everything was all right. The operator closed the incident as 'phone resolution' on the control room computer system. It later emerged that when the operator had made the follow-up call, the aggressor was standing with a foot on the woman's throat.

In some instances, calls assigned a low level response (aiming to have an officer attend the address within four hours) were allocated for action by the DVO, even though no DVO would be on duty within the stipulated response time.⁸

⁸ Most DVOs work day shifts and are not on duty or call out at nights or weekends.

Call coding

In addition to assessing response priorities, control room operators classify calls by assigning opening codes which broadly designate the type of incident. Additional descriptive codes are then attached when the incident has been dealt with and closed. All but one force have in place an incident logging system with a designated code for domestic incidents. However, seven forces reported that they coded for domestic 'violence' only. Forces varied as to whether the system required a single closing code to be selected or allowed a combination of closing codes to be used.

Control room supervisors acknowledged the difficulty of achieving a reliable and consistent level of accurate coding by the large number of officers and civilian control room staff. A number of underlying problems were identified. Although incidents were occasionally miscoded, a potentially greater problem was that while the assigned code might be accurate, it might not necessarily include the code designating a domestic incident. Serious assaults against the person were particularly problematic in this respect. The performance of control room operators is assessed in terms of the timeliness of the police response, not the accuracy or completeness of coding. As a result, code assignment was of low level importance. Many operators were unlikely to be aware of their force's definition of domestic violence. As one supervisor said, "the incident is only what the operator perceives it to be. This is not a system for producing statistics". Without operator awareness of the definition of domestic violence it is impossible to ensure that an accurate response is recorded.

Another problem lies in the dependence of control room staff on operational officers for information. One observed, "if we had to chase officers for accurate results so as to code correctly we'd never get anything else done". The information given may be misleading or patrol officers may ask the operator not to code an incident as 'domestic' in order to avoid having to complete the paperwork required for referrals to DVOs. These practices were also acknowledged by some of the patrol officers interviewed.

Incident tagging

In addition to coding, some control rooms tagged certain incidents on the computer system to designate them for the attention of DVOs. Where systems permitted tagging, control room supervisors felt the tag was a useful feature as it provided a method for highlighting domestic incidents which was independent of code assignment. Nevertheless, tagging suffers from the same reliability problems that afflict the coding procedure.

Trawling

DVOs reported that they could not rely on coding or tagging procedures to identify all domestic incident calls received by the control room. ‘Trawling’ involves DVOs going through records of calls received by the control room in an attempt to identify domestic incidents of which they should have been made aware. As they felt that they could rely neither on coding nor tagging procedures to identify all of them, 47 DVOs (66%) conducted their own trawls of control room records to identify domestic incidents. Although universally regarded by DVOs as a time-consuming exercise, trawling is likely to be a necessary part of the DVO role until coding and tagging are performed accurately and reliably. The range of the trawl varied from a review of all incidents in a particular time period to a narrower scrutiny of assaults, arrests and abandoned ‘999’ calls. One control room supervisor said that after a DVO complained about the proportion of missed cases, he instituted a check and found that only 50% were being tagged correctly.

Information for patrol officers responding to a domestic incident

Historical information

Responding patrol officers were said to be given historical information about previous incidents at the address by 35 forces (83% of those in the survey). This was seen as particularly important in relation to officer safety. As one officer said, “You can’t risk assess without this information”. However, patrol officers noted this information was not routinely passed on in all cases: “Operators don’t always tell you if there is any history so I always ask.” Others said that they sometimes found out that the control room computer held previous history only after they returned to the station and were completing their own paperwork: “Too often, we’re going in blind”.

When an incident was reported, control rooms in different forces differed in the ways they could access information about previous incidents at the location.⁹ In general, the easier the process for accessing this information, the more likely operators were to pass it on. If operators had to access a second screen for the information, they sometimes failed to check it. The most straightforward systems brought up historical information on the screen automatically and required the operator to assess whether it was relevant to the current incident; if the operator thought it was, the history was linked to the current incident. This automatic linking was reported by DVOs to be very helpful when printed out on reports. Command and control systems could give historical information about previous calls to the address (though not always to

⁹ Operators were usually expected to pass historical information to patrol officers, although the control room supervisor in one force said this was not required because the target for operator response time was so tight.

the precise street number) over a period ranging from the previous 30 days to over a year.

Markers

The use of domestic violence 'markers' varied widely. Markers were used by DVOs to flag up addresses on the command and control system where:

- alarms had been installed or a priority need for information to be passed on existed;
- there was concern about repeat victimisation; or
- there was a perceived need for positive action.

The number of available markers varied and criteria for their use were rarely written down. Some DVOs reported being restricted to about five or six markers, while others used around 40. Some forces felt that the more markers there were on the system, the more likely they would be ignored or down-played. Practice relating to their use lacked consistency; DVOs often had no way of knowing if information associated with the marker was passed on to patrol officers, but sometimes they became aware during follow-ups that the officers had not been told. Sometimes markers were deleted from the system without reference to the DVO. Limitations on the use of markers and questions about their effectiveness made frequent review important, but this rarely formed part of the responsibilities of either the DVO manager or the control room supervisor.

In most computer systems, a few lines of history could be attached to the marker. However, in one force, operators seeing the marker were expected to refer to a manual binder with information to be passed on to the responding officers. The supervisor and operators were unaware of the meaning of the marker or the need to refer to the binder.

Other information

Other information which could be of importance to responding officers included the existence of injunctions, powers of arrest, bail conditions or procedures under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. These could be mentioned briefly in markers or history. Such information was usually available in the control room on paper records only. The process by which copies of injunctions reached the control room and the way in which they were filed and maintained was erratic, with operators often relying on the caller to tell them whether an injunction was in force.

Referrals to DVOs by officers attending domestic incidents

Sixty five (92%) of the DVOs interviewed by telephone received information about domestic incidents from patrol officers, usually on a specially designed form. Estimates of the proportion of incidents for which a form was produced varied among forces from over 90% to fewer than 50%. DVOs identified incidents for which responding officers had failed to make a referral by trawling coded incidents on the command and control system, or by cross-checking with incidents tagged to DVOs by the control room.

It was a standard requirement that referrals be made to the DVO before the end of the patrol officer's shift. Speed was crucial as the effectiveness of any follow-up by the DVO diminished as time since the incident increased. However, the information recorded on forms varied between forces and sometimes among divisions within a force. Sometimes officers forgot to obtain information required by the form such as the names and dates of birth of children. One force supplied officers with a small plastic card with a reminder of the categories of information required; others encouraged officers to carry the form in patrol cars. Further delays could be caused by the shift system; for example, if day-time DVOs had to 'chase' officers on night duty, delays of days or even weeks could occur before information was obtained.

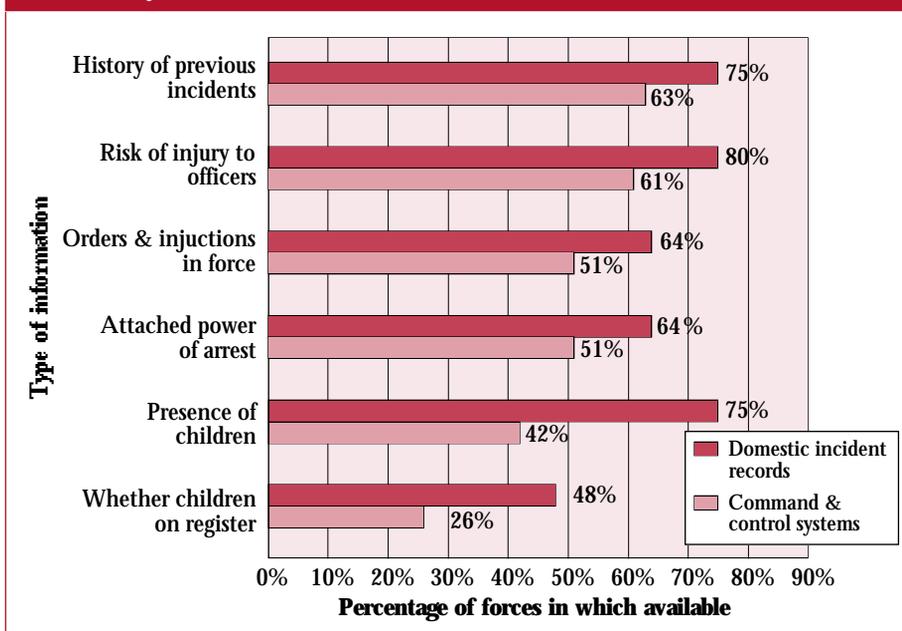
Even where an incident had not been recorded as a crime or was closed as no further action, information contained in report forms was found to be useful by DVOs. On occasions, however, this information was not passed on as officers did not see why it might be relevant for the DVO to log it. Training by DVOs was thought by some to have improved both the quality and timeliness of form completion by responding officers, although these messages needed to be reinforced by managers. Other DVOs felt that there was little they could do to improve the performance of patrol officers. They complained about the lack of support from supervising officers: "We have to work with the uniforms again so we can't make waves...there is no point in complaining to sergeants or inspectors about poor completion – they're just the same."

Such problems were acknowledged by supervisors themselves. Even where procedures for dealing with problems existed, they were rarely used. For example, one inspector described a procedure for DVOs to bring 'problem' forms to him if an officer failed to respond to requests for information, so that the inspector could take this up with the shift supervisor. He admitted that he had never actually intervened on a DVO's behalf in this way.

Accessibility and quality of information in domestic incident records

In addition to command and control systems, DVOs kept their own records of incidents. Figure 5 compares the frequency with which information on a number of key areas was available from both of these sources. It was evident that DVO records held more information.

Figure 5: Comparison of information on domestic incidents available from command and control systems and from domestic violence records



Specialist officers in 20 forces (48%) kept at least some domestic incident records on computer, although in eight of these records held in other divisions were not computerised. Access to computerised DVO records was available force-wide in only 10 forces. Only one control room visited during fieldwork could access directly domestic incident records held on computer. Delays were also common where command and control systems were not automatically updated with historical data. Occasionally, records were weeks in arrears. The timeliness of data input was not a performance measure routinely reviewed by managers.

The marginalisation of domestic violence within some forces had caused it to be left behind in the movement towards intelligence-led policing. DVOs and their managers were frustrated that the information they held was not considered as a useful police resource. Examples included detectives in homicide cases failing to contact DVOs, even though domestic violence records held information about the family. Commanders complained that there was little or no input from domestic violence records into crime intelligence. One said, “DVOs here are policing a population with a lot of police contact. They could be a hub for problem-solving and intelligence, but the extent to which they feed into our information systems is minimal.”

Communicating information about children

Domestic violence is a feature of many of the child protection cases with the worst outcomes, yet professionals often give little attention to children’s exposure to high levels of violence (Farmer and Owen, 1995). This highlights the need for good communication between child protection officers and DVOs, and also with social services departments.

The current study revealed variations in the way forces responded to the presence of children in households where a domestic incident took place. The main differences were in:

- the use of markers on the command and control system to identify addresses where children were on the child protection register;
- the actions taken by patrol officers when children were in the house at a domestic incident, and the information recorded;
- the criteria for communicating information about an incident to social services;
- the responsibility for passing on such information (sometimes DVOs preferred this to be done by police child protection officers); and
- the existence of an integrated child protection and domestic violence index.

A more accurate measure of risk can be provided if the whole family situation is considered, but few forces in this study had been able to integrate indices. Thirty six DVOs (43%) described themselves as co-located with child protection officers, but few actually shared an integrated index. Exchanging information involved checking and updating two sets of records. Where DVOs and child protection officers were in different police premises, communication for the purpose of checking and updating records was much more difficult. As one child protection officer commented, “When we are on the phone here or out of the office, we are not available to answer queries from DVOs”.

Some forces used a flag on the command and control system to notify officers responding to domestic incidents that a child at the address was on the child protection register (see Figure 5). The information flagged could also be accessed by DVOs and child protection officers.

Reasons given for not using a child protection flag were:

- the number of children whose names were held on the child protection register;
- the need for the system to be updated if a family moved (relying on information from social services); or
- the number of names removed from the child protection register.

One force had conducted a survey in part of its area to check the number of times officers were called to addresses where a child was on the register. The force policy officer described the level of call-out revealed by the survey as “staggering – much higher than either we or social services had been aware of”. Over a 17-month period, the police logged an average of five visits to each register address: one address had been visited 61 times. One third of all these calls concerned domestic violence. The survey was considered so valuable that it was extended force-wide. The findings underscored the liaison responsibilities of DVOs and resulted in an increased demand for them to attend case conferences.

There were inconsistencies in relation to where information was stored and what information was available in different locations. For example, information about children on the register in one force was held on the local intelligence system but not on command and control. The child protection officer interviewed mistakenly believed the local intelligence system could be accessed by command and control and that the information was therefore available to patrol officers. The local intelligence officer felt that the information should have been on the command and control system.

A further problem identified by DVOs was the lack of adequate communication between themselves and social services. There appeared to be no standard criteria across forces as to when information should be passed to social services about a child in a household where a domestic incident had been reported. Practices in place include:

- automatic referral to social services of all incidents where there was a child at the address;
- referral of ‘selected’ incidents only;

- referral only if it was thought that children might be harmed physically;
- no referral if the children were asleep when the incident occurred;
- informing social services of a single serious incident or three less serious incidents in a short period of time;
- asking the police child protection unit to refer where there is a second incident; and
- leaving the decision to child protection officers on whether to refer to social services.

Some DVOs had arranged to share information with health visitors and education welfare officers, although the passing on of information to social services and other agencies was seldom the subject of written inter-agency agreements.

Many senior officers expressed concern about uneven practice across the force on this issue, a problem exacerbated by the subdivision of old local authority areas and the creation of new unitary authorities. Many forces dealt with eight or more social services departments. A command team member who felt strongly that all incidents with children should be passed on said it was up to individual social services departments to decide how to manage the information, and that DVOs “should not let the volume floor them”. Another said that social services and Area Child Protection Committees needed to have a proper audit trail of what was happening with these referrals and pointed out that DVOs are not in a position to carry out a risk assessment as they do not have the full picture of what is happening to a child. Senior managers were also concerned that officers invited to attend ‘children in need’¹⁰ rather than ‘child protection’ case discussions would have difficulty in passing on information about families because of data protection concerns.

¹⁰ Multi-agency committees to address ‘children in need’ were part of children’s services plans introduced by Local Authority Circular LAC (92) 18. The 1995 Department of Health report ‘Child Protection: Messages from Research’ had suggested a shift of focus in which more children would be identified as being ‘in need’ and fewer as requiring ‘protection’.

6. Monitoring

A key factor in the success of any domestic violence response is the adequacy of arrangements to monitor both the level of demand and the quality of the service being delivered. The information that monitoring provides is a prerequisite for effective performance management. If monitoring is not in place, the message conveyed is one that domestic violence is of low importance, reinforcing negative attitudes to this work which may exist within forces.

The study looked at forces' monitoring arrangements in relation to the levels and patterns of domestic violence offending within the force area and to the quality of the response provided. In both cases there was little evidence of a systematic approach to monitoring or effective mechanisms for using the information that emerged to improve performance. Forces are encouraged to take positive action through arresting domestic violence offenders (Home Office Circular 60/1990). Sixty six per cent of forces measured the proportion of incidents which resulted in an arrest, compared with 95% of forces which emphasised the presumption of arrest in their policies.

Monitoring the level and pattern of domestic violence offending

Information on the extent of domestic violence offending can inform decisions about staffing levels and deployment. The data are also useful in detecting changes in reported offending patterns and assessing the effectiveness of the force's response. However, the interpretation of the figures needs care, especially as incidents are often dealt with in a manner that assigns them a low profile within the criminal justice system. For instance, common assault was not a recordable offence at the time of the study and neither breach of the peace nor breaching bail conditions is a crime.

Thirty-eight (93%) of the 41 policy interviewees indicated that their force collected some statistics relating to domestic violence offending. Table 2 shows which statistics were collected and how many forces collected them.

Table 2: Statistics collected on incidence of domestic violence

Type of information	Number that collect (%)
Total number of incidents	38 (93%)
Repeat victimisation	24 (59%)
Complaints against offenders from injured parties ⁽¹⁾	16 (39%)
Complaints that are subsequently withdrawn	12 (29%)
Other factors ⁽²⁾	5 (12%)

- (1) Many reports to the police of domestic violence incidents are not made by victims but by others such as neighbours. In such cases, the victim may decline to make a complaint against the alleged abuser. This explains why the number of incidents and the number of complaints against offenders are separate entries in this table.
- (2) Other statistics collected include: the number of incidents involving violence; the number of incidents involving drink or drugs; the number of incidents in which children were in the house; and the ethnic origin, age and gender of both victim and offender.

Monitoring the quality of the domestic violence response

Performance indicators and statistics

Forces are recommended to make comprehensive record-keeping a central feature of force policy;¹¹ the commitment of senior officers is thought to be more likely if they have a stake in performance outcomes. Table 3 shows the statistics that are collected and the number of forces which collect them.

¹¹ Home Office Circular 60/1990.

Table 3: Statistics collected on response to domestic violence

Type of information	Number that collect (%)
Arrests	27 (66%)
Number of incidents giving rise to a crime report	24 (59%)
Referrals to outside agencies	14 (34%)
Cautions	13 (32%)
Charges	13 (32%)
Refused charges	10 (24%)
Police bail with conditions	5 (12%)
Other factors ⁽¹⁾	8 (20%)

- (1) Other response statistics included: domestic violence forms completed each month; domestic violence incidents giving rise to police child protection proceedings; offenders detained in police custody; offenders who are bound over; statements taken; meetings with victims; incidents giving rise to a prosecution and the outcome; court appearances; and incidents in which no further action was taken.

Statistics are useful as performance indicators only when the information they contain is used to assess and improve the effectiveness of the force's response. Policy interviewees in the 38 forces who collected statistics were asked how they used the data collected. Only 30 were able to reply:

- 6 (20%) responded definitively that the data were used to generate statistical reports which were then used in reviewing performance;
- 11 (37%) gave a vague response, for instance "We're just starting to use them," "they're used in discussions" or, "They feed in to our monthly statistics but domestic violence does not appear as a separate category;" and
- 13 (43% of the 30 who responded) said they did nothing with the data.

Some DVOs prepared an annual report containing statistical tables. These could be useful in raising and resolving specific problems. For example, one report included the number of attempts to contact the DVO by phone which encountered an engaged signal. The force call-logging analyst recommended diversion of such calls to a second extension with an answering machine.

Twenty-six policy interviewees (63%) indicated that their force's domestic violence response was subject to an internal review mechanism. Measuring the quality of service to victims has been shown to provide a more rounded picture of police effectiveness (Bridgeman and Hobbs, 1997). However, only six (15%) forces had carried out victim satisfaction surveys.

Managers in some of the fieldwork areas found performance indicators relating to first-line response to be most useful, for instance, the proportion of incidents that resulted in an arrest. The presumption of arrest was mentioned in 95% of force policies; this key performance measure was used by 27 forces (66%). There was general agreement that indicators were particularly valuable when comparing the performance of different areas within the force. One manager stressed the need for exception reports to highlight anomalous performance in a particular area. Another manager in headquarters had used statistics to compare the performance of areas with differing domestic violence staffing levels.

Comparative data can also be of value in assessing the performance of DVOs. There was evidence that some forces had failed to appreciate this. For example, in one force in which divisions were being further sub-divided into sectors, DVOs had only been asked to provide each sector separately with statistics relating to their performance, but had not been asked for this information on a comparative basis.

The research revealed that no force monitored its domestic violence response in totality, that is by looking at all the individual components – control room, patrol officers, custody sergeants and DVOs – and the interfaces between them. However, many of the problems occur at these interfaces, such as:

- control room officers not providing responding patrol officers with historical information about incidents and not coding incidents as domestic violence;
- patrol officers not referring cases to DVOs; and
- custody officers not charging offenders who had been arrested.

Accountability

The Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 introduced the concept of accountability through the publication of policing plans. As well as forming an agreement between the chief officer and the police authority, policing plans tell the public what services and standards they can expect.¹² They can also aid performance monitoring. Inclusion of an objective on domestic violence is an effective way of making the issue central to the force as a whole. However, many senior officers acknowledged that domestic violence was either not included in force-wide or local policing plans, or was mentioned without the attachment of specific targets or performance indicators.

¹² *Crime and Disorder Act 1998 crime reduction strategies will provide further opportunities for whole force support for a particular policing responsibility.*

This was attributed to a pervasive view that forces are not held accountable nationally or locally for their domestic violence performance. There are no national key objectives or key policing priorities relating specifically to domestic violence. A detective inspector in headquarters in one area said statistics were submitted to area command teams and it was stressed to them that domestic violence accounts for 18% of violent crime. The officer felt that teams had difficulty in making this connection as domestic violence statistics were not part of area targets which relate to car theft, burglary and violent crime overall. These were linked in turn to budgetary incentives which were the dominant concern.

Commanders also noted that domestic violence did not form part of periodic reviews conducted by assistant chief constables. Commanders suggested that domestic violence indicators should be developed in collaboration with those who had operational responsibility, included in the force plan and then made mandatory for divisions using, as one put it, “a mutually agreed model with minimum parameters”.

One area commander's local plan included a low-level objective relating to domestic violence (to hold a number of meetings with social services). However,

responsibility for these meetings had been assigned to a community affairs liaison inspector, even though that officer had no responsibility for the domestic violence function. The commander admitted that no one with direct responsibility for domestic violence had taken part in the development of the plan. This failure to involve those responsible for the domestic violence response in the development of policing plans was repeated in other forces.

Data reliability and use of IT

Although this study did not examine systematically arrangements for data collection, some facts relevant to data reliability emerged during the course of interviews and fieldwork. As well as distorting performance figures, poor data can directly impact on staffing levels. In one force a proposal to cut a domestic violence position had been based on numbers which did not include all domestic incidents in the system or referrals to the DVO from external sources.

Concerns were voiced about the forms used by responding officers to report incidents of domestic violence to DVOs. These forms are also a key source of statistical data on domestic violence. (The diligence with which these forms were completed was discussed in the previous section.) In one force visited during fieldwork, the system for providing reports, including those generated by officers responding to domestic violence, had recently been computerised. Paradoxically, this had resulted in a reduction in the number of domestic violence reports being completed and a consequent under-counting of the total number of incidents, perhaps because crime reports were seen as having higher priority.

Well-designed IT systems can help in improving the response to domestic violence. If computerised information is available force-wide, the database can be searched across the force area for names of offenders and victims who have moved. However, most of the computerised card-box systems maintained by DVOs were stand-alone and contained information on local incidents only, and DVOs in different divisions of the same force often used different data collection software. The value of a standard force-wide system was not always recognised. One headquarters inspector with domestic violence responsibility had tried and failed to get funding for a standard system; another manager commented, "To get a standard database across the force would have meant going before users' committees for two years". If the commander wanted domestic violence statistics, it was quicker to get a system funded on division and designed by the local performance manager. Other problems with these systems were millennium incompatibility and limitations on the size of database that could be accommodated.

DVOs commonly had backlogs of forms awaiting data entry to computer – sometimes of weeks or even months. These backlogs not only degraded the accuracy of domestic violence statistics but also hampered support to repeat victims because of the incompleteness of available historical information. Further record-keeping problems arose for DVOs who had no one to cover for them when they were not available. The lack of adequate cover was referred to by over 80% of DVOs interviewed. In one force, a domestic violence officer was seconded to a murder inquiry and, as a result, her division failed to provide monthly statistics for almost a year.

Problems were also encountered in relation to other force computer systems. Many custody systems include a field which allows domestic violence to be recorded but DVOs reported that this was rarely filled in and so the statistics produced differed from those based on domestic violence forms.

Repeat victimisation

It is estimated that 90% of domestic violence to women involves systematic and often escalating violent behaviour. Repeat victimisation figures are useful in monitoring performance and focusing the work of DVOs. Despite the fact that many senior officers felt that the ability to demonstrate a reduction in repeat victimisation was an important indicator of success,¹³ 41% of policy interviewees said that their force did not monitor the level of repeat victimisation.

A few DVOs were trying to target repeat victimisation systematically: as repeat incidents were identified, the DVO would carry out a series of tasks following a specific pattern, for instance a letter to the victim followed by a telephone call and finally a home visit. Such a structured response allowed the effectiveness of different interventions to be monitored and forms a basis for evaluating the success of the work of the DVO.¹⁴

Even in forces committed to reducing repeat victimisation, problems had been encountered in developing a simple way to identify and count the number of repeats. Some forces restricted attention to incidents of a similar type within a given period. Others did not use a specific time interval but instead checked through all records that had been computerised. There was widespread concern that computer systems could not adequately identify repeat incidents. One of the forces that produced statistics on repeat victimisation had been forced to rely on the crime reporting system for data. The DVOs' computer records could not produce this information.

¹³ The Home Office's key performance indicator for repeat victimisation defines it as occurring when the same person or place suffers from more than one incident over a period of time. The report 'Preventing Repeat Victimisation: the police officers' guide' suggests that a 12 month rolling period should be used, as "anything less may hide relevant crimes and anything more may become unmanageable" (Bridgeman and Hobbs, 1997). This report gives a 'worked example' demonstrating how to calculate the extent of repeat victimisation.

¹⁴ For a detailed example of a staged response, see Bridgeman and Hobbs, 1997 at pp.17-18. This sets out three levels of intervention for victims and perpetrators in the Killingbeck domestic violence project.

In order to understand the pattern of domestic violence locally and also to measure the effects of any intervention, three measures are relevant: the number of incidents (incidence); the number of incidents of repeat victimisation (concentration); and the number of victims (prevalence). The forthcoming Killingbeck report discusses how these measures should be considered in combination (Hanmer, Griffiths and Jerwood, forthcoming). If, for example, following a preventive initiative, the number of incidents remained constant this could be because there had been no effect. An alternative and desirable reason for the lack of change in incidence would be that repeat victimisation had fallen but that more women were reporting attacks, shown by an increase in prevalence. Ultimately, when 'saturation' is reached (because there is not a limitless supply of women requiring police attendance) one would expect to see the overall numbers of incidents reduce if repeat victimisation continued to be effectively prevented.

7. Training

Training on domestic violence is important for all ranks, not only to give officers the necessary skills but also in order to challenge outmoded attitudes and to ensure appropriate force policy is implemented. This section examines training provision in general and the special arrangements for those with responsibility for domestic violence. It also looks at the involvement of DVOs in training delivery. Arrangements for training trainers and involvement in external training programmes are discussed. In general, training provision was patchy, even for specialists, and forces appeared to lack a strategy for delivering training to senior personnel and others with a key role in the force's response to domestic violence.

General training provision on domestic violence

Thirty-five forces (83%) said that they provided in-house domestic violence training to officers other than specialists. In 17 forces, the only training given on domestic violence was to probationers as part of their initial general training and induction. In a further 17 forces the target audience was probationers and constables. Only one force trained a wider group. Most of the constables interviewed during the fieldwork said they had not received in-force domestic violence training, even though they worked in forces which claimed to provide such training.

Where in-house training was given, it was heavily dependent on the contribution of DVOs. Forty six (65%) delivered training to other officers. They emphasised the need to treat training on domestic violence as a rolling programme, to reinforce good practice and attitudes to 'positive action' which otherwise fell away over time. Updates were necessary because of new legislation and the development of local initiatives. Sometimes offers to provide training for various police groups had, as one DVO put it, "fallen on deaf ears". Some DVOs had tried to target control room staff, custody officers, detectives and shift sergeants, but with varying degrees of success. It was thought to be particularly difficult to get senior officers to attend training but where this had happened, it raised the profile of domestic violence work generally throughout the force.

Some training methods were felt to be more successful than others. Training approaches which had been helpful included playing tapes of domestic violence calls, reviewing the record of police responses to incidents that had eventually resulted in homicide and discussing policing strategies to break the cycle of repeat victimisation. Input to tutor constables, who act as mentors to probationers, was thought to be important.

A number of forces were in the process of introducing some form of attachment for constables to introduce them to the work of DVOs. The length of time involved varied, with the longest lasting several months. It was felt that longer assignments allowed DVOs and their managers to screen potential future candidates for the position. All such attachments helped spread awareness of domestic violence issues. One force had developed detailed objectives for a two-week attachment for probationers. It asked them to complete questionnaires assessing their knowledge at the beginning and end of the attachment. These involved asking the probationer to respond to a number of hypothetical scenarios.

Training for those with special responsibility for domestic violence

Twenty nine managers (69%) and 55 operational officers (66%) described domestic violence training as deficient in some respect. 30 forces (71%) considered that additional police training was required as a result of new legislative provisions in Part IV of the Family Law Act 1996 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

Twenty forces (56%) reported that officers with special responsibility for domestic violence received training for their role. Fourteen forces (70%) said that training was delivered through in-house courses, mostly lasting between three and five days, although two forces provided a 10-day course. However, only 28 operational officers (33%) and 16 line managers (38%) had received such training. Interviewees in 15 of the forces which reported providing courses said they had not received any specialist training.

Evidence suggests that some of the most successful training on child protection and domestic violence is delivered jointly by trainers representing both specialisms (Hendry, 1998). However, DVOs and child protection officers in fieldwork forces said that they rarely received training together.

Training the trainers

DVOs said that training skills were crucial to their job although often they were not taken into account in staff appraisal. Although a few DVOs delivered courses with the help of force trainers, many of them conducted training on their own and much of this work was undertaken on the DVO's initiative. It often took a significant amount of their time. One DVO said, "The amount involved is always grossly underestimated – I spend a third of my time on training". The lack of involvement from official trainers was due in part to the many competing priorities for police training, but one DVO described this as unfortunate, as "training needs to be owned by the training department".

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A one-week 'training for domestic violence trainers' course for all DVOs, which they had found very valuable, has been conducted by one force in the study. In the divisions where their offers to provide training had been accepted, these DVOs had seen an improvement in the police response, in turn reflected in positive letters from victims and solicitors. However, the majority of DVOs in other forces said they had received little or no training as trainers themselves.

Training other organisations

Most DVOs were involved in external training. Some were systematically working their way through groups represented on the domestic violence forum and this consumed a significant proportion of time. Targeting primary health care teams – health visitors, GPs and midwives – was felt to increase the number of referrals to DVOs.

8. Conclusions

This section draws together conclusions from the report presented under the relevant section headings. These conclusions form the basis for the recommendations made in section 9.

Police policies on domestic violence

- The lack of a nationally agreed definition of domestic violence is a major obstacle to assessing police performance. Because of this, statistics cannot be directly compared. Agreeing a national definition is essential if reliable national statistics of reported recorded incidents are to be produced.
- To ensure that domestic violence policy is both relevant and communicated effectively, it is important that controls relating to the production and updating of policy documents are in place.
- It was clear from the study that complaints of domestic violence, either against or by police officers, require specified procedures which allow them to be investigated in confidence and without bias.

Force organisational structures

- Forces in the survey had used different organisational models in designing their domestic violence response and some had adopted different models within the same force.
- No single structure emerged as more or less problematic than any of the others. The problems related less to the structure than to the status of domestic violence work within forces, the level of commitment of headquarters and divisional commanders, the clarity with which responsibilities were defined and the effectiveness of management arrangements.
- In many forces where responsibility for DVOs had been devolved to divisions, headquarters staff retained little or no managerial oversight for the force response or responsibility for inconsistencies in the performance of different divisions.
- The apparent lack of direction or oversight of domestic violence matters on the part of headquarters communicated itself down through the command structure resulting in a generally low status for domestic violence work.
- Arrangements for managing domestic violence work were often unclear with managerial commitment lacking and lines of accountability blurred.
- This led to domestic violence often being marginalised within the force. One

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consequence of this was that advantage was not taken of the information in domestic violence records to improve the quality of intelligence available more generally throughout the force.

The role of the specialist domestic violence officer

- DVOs provided a valuable resource which was not being used to the police service's full advantage. The position tended to be inadequately and inaccurately specified in force documentation and was not sufficiently integrated into mainstream policing. These problems contributed to poor monitoring of the role and to low awareness of its potential importance to other police functions. An underlying problem encountered by DVOs was the persistence of outdated attitudes to domestic violence including a perception that it did not constitute core police business.
- There was no standard model for the DVO role among forces in the study. A wide spectrum of activities were represented, including victim liaison and support, liaison with external agencies, training delivery within the force and externally, involvement with investigations and administration. Some DVOs had little or no direct contact with victims; others did little else. For those with responsibility for training and inter-agency liaison, or under pressure to perform administrative tasks, contact with victims often accounted for a relatively small proportion of their time.
- Most DVOs took no part in investigations. Those who worked closely with investigating officers described significant benefits to the prosecution process, although some DVOs were concerned that an investigative role might undermine their work with victims.
- Those performing the DVO role often felt marginalised and under-valued within the force. The low status of the role added to the stress already felt by DVOs because of their contact with victims. Reported stress levels were higher still for DVOs who worked alone.
- The feeling of isolation was compounded by managers who adopted a 'hands-off' approach. Few systematically monitored the performance of DVOs. Many managers were reluctant to press for more resources on behalf of DVOs or to get involved in resolving problems at the interface with other police functions. Few DVO managers were held accountable for how they carried out the task.
- Administration had become the dominant task for many DVOs who were

therefore making little use of their years of experience and training in operational police work.

Information management

- The mechanisms for identifying domestic incidents appeared unreliable. Reports to DVOs from patrol officers and the coding or tagging of domestic incidents by control room operators both under-counted the true figures.
- Officers responding to incidents could not rely on the control room to tell them about information held on the command and control computer including previous incidents at the address and the 'markers' containing other relevant information.
- Information in manual records held in the control room, such as injunctions and Protection from Harassment Act orders, was seldom communicated to responding officers.
- Local domestic violence records held more detail than command and control systems. Much of this was directly relevant to officers responding to incidents and to police intelligence systems. However, even where a domestic violence database was held on computer, it was seldom accessible by the control room.
- DVOs spent excessive amounts of time seeking information on incidents which should have been provided to them routinely.
- Few forces had been able to integrate the information held on child protection and domestic violence databases, even though the same families often appeared on both. Most DVOs and officers responding to domestic incidents did not have ready access to information about whether children at an address were on the child protection register.
- DVOs in some areas were left to exercise their own judgement about whether to communicate with social workers about children in households where domestic incidents were reported. The criteria for passing on information were unclear and were rarely incorporated into written inter-agency agreements.

Monitoring

- Forces' monitoring arrangements in respect of domestic violence varied widely. Apart from the total number of incidents, no other single statistic relating either

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to incidence or performance was collected by more than two out of three forces.

- Repeat victimisation, acknowledged as a key indicator in this field, was measured by only 59% of forces. Moreover, the term 'repeat victimisation' was interpreted in different ways. No standard time interval for repetitions was used.
- Few forces used the information contained in their statistics constructively and standards of performance monitoring were generally low. Most divisions received no data on how their performance compared with others within the force, although where this information was circulated it was considered to be of great value.
- No force had adopted a 'systemic' approach to monitoring their domestic violence response by looking at all the police functions involved and how effectively they worked together.
- The inadequacy of monitoring arrangements was linked to a pervasive view that domestic violence performance did not affect significantly a force's standing. There were no national key objectives or key policing priorities that referred specifically to domestic violence. There were few references to domestic violence in policing plans and little acknowledgement of the high proportion of violent crime that is domestic in origin.
- The low status of domestic violence work affected the reliability of data collection and the willingness to assign scarce IT resources for the collection of domestic violence statistics.

Training

- Despite the prominence of domestic violence in policy, forces generally did not have a coherent training strategy to ensure its effective implementation. Much of the training had been developed on an ad hoc basis.
- Only one force routinely provided training on domestic violence to ranks higher than constable.
- A minority of interviewees had received domestic violence training, even in forces which claimed to provide it, and the majority described training as deficient in some respect.
- Most forces thought that additional training would be required to address recent

criminal and civil legislation.

- The burden of training, both within the force and externally, fell heavily on DVOs. Even though they saw their involvement in training as worthwhile, it was time-consuming and often took place at the expense of other domestic violence duties. Some said that their managers were unaware of the proportion of their time taken up by training within the force and to external groups.
- The DVOs' training contribution was often provided without assistance or back-up from force trainers. Many DVOs had received little or no training as trainers themselves.

9. Recommendations

This section sets out a number of recommendations arising from the study findings. These are aimed at assisting forces in developing an appropriate and effective organisational response to domestic violence. Although it was initially thought that recommendations would be aimed at forces themselves, it emerged during the study that certain improvements would require Home Office action. For this reason, the recommendations are grouped according to the different audiences to which they are addressed, namely the Home Office, force headquarters and divisional commanders. A final recommendation relates to aspects of forces' domestic violence response which should be included in HMIC inspections.

Police policies on domestic violence

Home Office

It would be beneficial if a definition of domestic violence were developed which meets the criteria set out in the report by the Scottish HMIC. Forces should be encouraged to adopt this definition in their domestic violence policy and to use it in providing statistical reports to the Home Office. A clear message on the importance of monitoring repeat victimisation should also be given to forces. This should include re-stating the recommendation of a 12 month rolling period over which such monitoring should be carried out. These steps would greatly improve the ability to monitor force performance.

Guidance for forces should be developed on the content of domestic violence policy documents. The guidance should include procedures to be followed in the case of a complaint by or against a police officer in relation to a domestic incident.

Force headquarters

Policy documents should carry a date, an issue number and a distribution list. There should also be a specified period between reviews.

Guidance should be developed for divisions relating to the handling of complaints of domestic violence involving a police officer. This should ensure that such complaints are dealt with by senior officers and with the necessary sensitivity.

The role of the specialist domestic violence officer

Home Office

Research should be conducted to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of different models for the DVO role, in particular the use of DVOs in an investigative capacity, and the contribution of civilian support personnel.

Force headquarters

Clear priorities should be established for the tasks DVOs are required to perform.

Divisional commanders

Divisions should develop job descriptions for the DVO role which reflect the priorities set by headquarters. The time spent by DVOs on each task should be monitored as part of performance management and the scope of the role reviewed regularly in the light of the results. Line management responsibilities at a divisional level should also be clarified.

Force organisational structures

Force headquarters

Individual force headquarters should restate their commitment to the quality and consistency across divisions of the forces' response to domestic violence. They should develop a statement of how that commitment will be delivered. This is likely to include:

- developing meaningful performance indicators and targets relating to domestic violence;
- requiring divisions to provide headquarters with statistical data on a regular basis to allow these indicators to be calculated;
- undertaking to provide divisions with comparative performance data and taking appropriate action where performance falls below an acceptable standard;
- monitoring stress indicators associated with the DVO role such as turnover, working hours and sickness rates, and ensuring that stress counselling is available if needed;
- standardising aspects of the response across divisions, for instance by introducing a standard domestic violence format for reporting; and
- identifying and promulgating best practice and developing pilot projects.

Forces might usefully review the relationship between child protection and domestic violence, focusing on issues of management, co-location, training and information sharing.

Divisional commanders

Divisions should consider establishing and documenting lines of accountability for their domestic violence response. The responsibilities of all those in the chain of command should be set out in writing and used as the basis of formal monitoring and progress reporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of the DVO should be more clearly integrated into the force structure by clarifying its interface with other police functions involved in responding to domestic violence. Standards of performance in relation to domestic violence should be specified for each of these functions and formal mechanisms established to allow the resolution of operational conflicts that arise.

Information management

Home Office

The Home Office, together with the Department of Health, should provide guidance to police forces and social services departments concerning the communication of information about children in households in which domestic violence incidents are reported. Criteria for passing on information should be incorporated into written inter-agency agreements which should address data protection concerns.

Force headquarters

Periodic monitoring of the transmission to officers of historical information and information contained in markers should be seen as part of any assessment of the domestic violence response. There should also be monitoring of the accuracy with which domestic violence incidents are coded, and the effectiveness of tagging specific incidents for the attention of DVOs.

Divisional commanders

Divisions should review practice relating to the following aspects of information management:

- DVOs' use of markers on the command and control system;
- access to information held on DVOs' systems; and
- forwarding of domestic incident reports to DVOs.

Monitoring

Home Office

A schedule of statistics for forces should be developed to facilitate performance monitoring at a national level.

HMIC

During its inspections, it would be beneficial if HMIC continued to assess the quality of forces' arrangements in respect of domestic violence.

Force headquarters

Force headquarters should consider specifying core parameters relating to domestic violence performance which divisions must measure and report on a regular basis. Based on the returns, headquarters could then produce and distribute statistical reports comparing the performance of divisions as measured by the core parameters. The requirement to produce statistics could be reflected in policing plans. The list of core parameters is likely to include:

- number of incidents;
- number of incidents of repeat victimisation;
- number of victims;
- number of arrests;
- number of incidents that give rise to a crime report; and
- proportion of violent crime that is domestic in origin.

Divisional commanders

Divisions should audit their data collection and referral mechanisms to ensure that the statistics produced accurately reflect the work being undertaken.

Training

Force headquarters

A comprehensive force training strategy on domestic violence for all officers should be developed, addressing awareness of its nature, procedural knowledge and the high proportion of violent crime that is domestic in origin. It should pay attention to officers with a key role to play in delivery of force policy but who have been previously overlooked, including shift sergeants, control room staff and custody officers. The strategy should include senior officers whose commitment to the delivery of force policy is essential.

Training should be delivered as a rolling programme with regular refresher elements. Links should be made between training and deficiencies in practice revealed by monitoring and evaluation.

Force headquarters should ensure that DVOs who are required to conduct training do so with some back-up from force training specialists. They should also ensure that these DVOs receive training as trainers and that the amount of time involved is monitored.

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