

## Dorset Police Domestic Abuse Action Plan – May 2016



In September 2013, the Home Secretary commissioned HMIC to conduct a national inspection to consider the effectiveness of the police approach to domestic abuse. It focused on the outcomes for victims and whether risks to victims of domestic abuse were adequately managed.

The objective was to identify lessons learnt from how the police approach domestic abuse, and make recommendations in relation to these findings.

Following on from the HMIC Inspection of Dorset Police the Inspectorate stated that: “The public in Dorset can have confidence that, generally, the police provide a good service to victims of domestic abuse and help keep them safe. Domestic abuse is a clear priority for the Force, and this is understood by staff at all levels. There has been a significant focus on domestic abuse, and its importance is reflected in the police and crime plan. The Force has a well-developed and effective response to high-risk victims of domestic abuse and staff worked well with partners.”

Chief Officer and portfolio holder for Protecting Vulnerable People, Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) Mark Cooper said: “We welcomed the inspection and are pleased that HMIC has viewed the Force’s on-going work positively. The public in Dorset can be assured that we strive for continuous improvement, recognising that tackling domestic abuse is of paramount importance. We have been recognised as providing a good service to victims and we will continue to share information and learning with all of our partner agencies to work together to make the community safer.”

As a result of the inspection and published report, Dorset Police introduced an action plan to address highlighted areas for improvement. Work is ongoing and this individual Force action plan covers several broad areas within the police response to domestic abuse.

The plan now in place to improve the service includes the following developments:

1. The Force has delivered specialist domestic abuse training to the majority of frontline officers with ongoing training for the remaining staff and officers being carried out during 2016. The training includes coercive and controlling behaviour, stalking and harassment, child sexual exploitation, safeguarding and honour based abuse. This training is being delivered in partnership with specialist non-government organisations.

2. The Force has a domestic abuse policy that strongly advocates positive action. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Force priorities focus on reducing harm to victims and all staff adopting a victim-centric approach to domestic abuse. The Force has a cohort of domestic abuse specialists and champions who provide direction and support to frontline staff in ensuring that the victim's view is fully considered before deciding on appropriate action.
3. The Force has increased the number of domestic abuse advisors across the force, providing more consistent victim care to a greater number of victims of domestic abuse. Consideration is being given to extending this service to weekends.
4. The Force has invested in specialist supervisory officers working in the Force Command Centre on a 24/7 basis, who provide direction and support to frontline officers during initial response and investigations of domestic abuse.
5. The Force has ensured all communications internally and externally have replaced 'domestic violence' with the broader term of 'domestic abuse' to reflect changes in legislation and ensure all victims of domestic abuse are identified.
6. Following a multi-agency strategy and working group, the Force is working with local partnership organisations to deliver perpetrator programme pilot projects in order to reduce re-offending and improve victim safety.
7. The Force monitors its performance in tackling domestic abuse in order to continuously improve the service provided to victims. This performance is measured in terms of both quantitative and qualitative information, seeking victims and partners views in the process.
8. The Force continues to deliver awareness training to staff on changes to domestic abuse legislation and procedures as they occur. Coercive and controlling behaviour Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) and Claire's Law disclosures are recent examples. Domestic abuse champions have further specific training to drive standards of investigation and victim care across the Force. The Force is committed to continuing this training as part of core professional development to staff working to tackle domestic abuse.
9. The Force is currently engaged in progressing changes to the roles of specialist domestic abuse staff to provide further support for appropriate investigative outcomes for medium and standard risk victims.

This ongoing work will enable Dorset Police to provide a stronger and more comprehensive approach to an area of business that is a clear priority for Dorset Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner Martyn Underhill, said: "Tackling domestic abuse is a key priority and one that the force performs well in. A recent HMIC inspection found Dorset Police is good at safeguarding victims of domestic abuse. We must ensure that agencies and the police continue to work closely together to ensure that victims feel confident enough to speak out."

ACC Mark Cooper continued: "All of our officers and staff are committed to the safeguarding of victims and children. This remains a priority for Dorset Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner. I would urge anyone suffering domestic or sexual abuse to come forward and report it. Action can be taken to keep you safe and we will work hard to act in confidence, in a way that respects your wishes."