



Police perpetrated domestic abuse

A review of the police handling of complaint and conduct matters involving police perpetrated domestic abuse.

December 2024

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Executive summary

Violence against women and girls, including police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA), continues to be a serious concern that threatens trust and confidence in policing. Through our focused work to tackle violence against women and girls, we continue to hear from our stakeholders that victim-survivors have a poor experience when reporting their abuse to the police, despite a number of new initiatives and measures. It is crucial that the voices of victim-survivors are heard to achieve a real culture change in policing. All police forces should be able to demonstrate a zero-tolerance approach to police perpetrated violence against women and girls, with a robust policing response.

The [Centre for Women's Justice \(CWJ\) super-complaint](#) submitted in 2020, raised concerns that police forces were not responding appropriately to cases of domestic abuse involving police officers or police staff. Following [a joint investigation and report in 2022](#) involving the IOPC, College of Policing and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), we began work looking into how the police handle PPDA.

To provide us with better insight into how forces are responding to reports of PPDA, we surveyed all police forces in England and Wales. We asked them how reports are identified and recorded, about initial assessment decisions and subsequent investigations. We asked for information on the training complaints handlers receive and what support is given to victim-survivors. The survey enabled us to obtain up-to-date information on the current practices in all police forces.

After receiving the results, more detailed discussions were held with six police forces to delve deeper into the themes of the survey. We were encouraged by new initiatives and processes that some police forces have introduced to improve their response to PPDA. Despite these steps, there is still more that needs to be done to improve the victim-survivor experience when reporting, including appropriate signposting to support agencies and positive safeguarding interventions.

This report focuses on how professional standards departments respond to complaints and conduct matters, where PPDA is a factor. We found that professional standards departments are making progress towards improving their response.

At the same time, there is a strong message from our stakeholders that there is more to do to ensure that PPDA is appropriately recorded and reported to professional standards departments in the first place. To address this, police forces should raise awareness with officers in frontline response roles, so they better understand the various forms of domestic abuse and the complex nature of coercive and controlling behaviour.

In our survey, police forces showed they were aware of their responsibilities when it came to responding to reports of PPDA. Where there are gaps, they identified areas for improvement. We heard about many encouraging new initiatives and changes to processes and structures in professional standards departments, as well as the upskilling of staff. The new initiatives and processes underway will take time to have an impact on the cases we see, but these are promising steps forward.

Forces should speak to victim-survivors and evaluate the new measures they have implemented to assess whether these are leading to improved experiences.

Our main findings

Our findings are grouped into themes covering different aspects of the police response to complaint and conduct matters involving PPDA. You can click on each of the underlined theme headings to jump to further detail within the main body of the report.

The report highlights a number of ‘calls to action’ which are aimed mostly at police forces. Rather than making new recommendations, we have focused on highlighting the promising practice that we have found and also the areas still requiring improvement. We intend for these ‘calls to action’ to set standards for handling complaint and conduct matters involving PPDA and are calling on police forces to use them as a checklist to consider against their processes. This will help to identify any areas for improvement that might apply to their police force.

Identification, reporting and recording

We know that the way a report of PPDA is reported and recorded on police systems is crucial. It acknowledges a victim-survivor's report of abuse, identifies behaviours, and enables accurate data reporting and intelligence gathering to build up a pattern of behaviour. We asked police forces a series of questions on how a report of PPDA is initially identified, referred to the professional standard departments (PSDs) and how it is then recorded on police case management systems. The response to the survey tells us that the picture is improving and that police forces are aware of their responsibilities when it comes to accurate PPDA recording on relevant crime and case management systems. This is an improvement from the data that was available to the IOPC in the past.

We are concerned that not all forces are using Centurion national factors to flag PPDA cases. This affects consistent data recording and monitoring activity. We also know that there is an issue that not every frontline officer understands all forms of domestic abuse and some behaviours are not taken seriously. This results in those reports not being recorded. More needs to be done to ensure that all police employees, and particularly those in frontline responding roles, understand the various forms of domestic abuse and the complex nature of coercive and controlling behaviour. This should not be limited to PSDs and specialist teams.

! Call to action: identification, reporting and recording

- Police forces should consider what training, information and guidance frontline officers receive to understand the different forms of domestic abuse. All those responding to reports of PPDA, whether they be frontline officers, supervisors or colleagues, should be aware of the more subtle forms of coercive and controlling behaviour and the importance of recording all reports for data capture, safeguarding and monitoring purposes.
- All police forces should move to the latest version of Centurion software as soon as possible to ensure consistent and accurate data recording.
- Heads of PSDs should satisfy themselves they have sufficient and accurate reporting mechanisms in place to be able to understand the PPDA picture in their police force.
- PSDs should actively and routinely use data from Centurion to monitor rates of PPDA and police perpetrated violence against women and girls to identify patterns of behaviour and officers of concern.

Reporting - police victim-survivors

We know that victim-survivors of PPDA who are also serving with the police face a unique set of barriers to reporting their abuse.

In our survey, we asked police forces what systems, if any, are in place for police employees to report PPDA. Forces told us about different ways that police victim-survivors can report abuse. These are positive and show a commitment to responding to the threat of PPDA, but we know there is more to do. Police victim-survivors need to see real change in their everyday experiences, removing the fear of repercussions at work and instilling confidence in the response. Police forces need to demonstrate to their staff that victim-survivors can have confidence in reporting PPDA and that the culture within forces is supportive.



Call to action: reporting - police victim-survivors

- Police forces should challenge themselves to consider the experiences of police victim-survivors in reporting PPDA and think critically about ways to remove the barriers to reporting.
- Police forces should demonstrate to their staff that they have a robust approach to investigations so that victim-survivors see real change and have confidence in reporting.
- Police forces should engage with police victim-survivors and the organisations supporting them, to properly understand any real or perceived concerns and requirements to meet their individual needs.

Initial response and assessment

Where a complaint or conduct matter is received into a PSD, the police force must assess the seriousness of the matter and decide how it will respond, including whether or not the matter is formally recorded and whether it will be subject to an investigation, or handled differently.

The IOPC expects that all PPDA reports should be responded to with vigour, which includes our expectation that all reports should be recorded and handled via an investigation. In our survey, nearly all forces told us that reports of PPDA would be subject to an investigation, as opposed to handling in other ways under the *Police Reform Act 2002*. We also asked police forces questions about how an associated criminal matter is handled and what happens when a criminal investigation results in a decision of no further action.

Some forces have shared new practice, where they have moved to a model of PSDs handling PPDA in their entirety, including the criminal element. These forces told us they were seeing benefits to this approach, including improved timeliness and a better experience for victim-survivors.



Call to action: initial response and assessment

- Heads of PSDs should review their initial assessment processes to ensure that **all** reports of PPDA are recorded under Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*.
- Heads of PSDs should ensure that all reports of PPDA receive a robust response and are not subject to handling otherwise than by investigation.
- Heads of PSDs should consider whether moving to a model where all PPDA reports, including criminal matters, are handled within PSD is feasible in their police force. Where it is not, they should satisfy themselves that sufficient supervision and monitoring is in place for matters handled outside of their PSD.

Ensuring impartial and independent investigations

We know that impartiality is crucial to securing the trust and confidence of those reporting their abuse to the police.

From our wider stakeholder engagement work, we also know that victim-survivors do not have confidence that investigations into PPDA are truly independent. Where a victim-survivor has no trust and confidence in a police force's response to a report of PPDA, they are unlikely to report their abuse.

Confidence in the police response to PPDA can also be affected where those working on the case have some connection to the police suspect (or the victim-survivor, where they are a person serving with the police). Police forces told us that they are confident they are identifying and managing conflicts of interest. They were also asked under what circumstances they would use an outside force to investigate to ensure independence. Their response was mixed with some forces outlining practical barriers, such as difficulties assigning an external force and adverse impacts on timeliness or quality.

It is vital that forces consider carefully the views of the victim-survivor when working out how to achieve impartiality and note the College of Policing guidance on when to appoint an external force to investigate.



Call to action: ensuring impartial and independent investigations

- Conflict of interest declarations should be recorded on all violence against women and girls' cases, including PPDA. Where this does not currently happen, Heads of PSDs should introduce a process immediately.
- At the start of an investigation, Heads of PSDs should be satisfied that they have considered whether the investigation is truly independent and they have given consideration to the views of the victim-survivor.
- Heads of PSDs should ensure the College of Policing authorised professional practice is followed for appointing an external force to investigate.

Complainant / victim-survivor support

The way that a PPDA victim-survivor is supported through the process of making a report is integral to their confidence in the system.

Early contact with a victim-survivor is crucial to identifying any immediate safeguarding concerns, vulnerabilities and need for ongoing support, alongside understanding more about the PPDA behaviour.

We asked police forces questions around victim-survivor support – the responses paint a promising picture around what is possible. The IOPC's view is that specialist support is needed, with a clear plan to meet the needs of the victim-survivor.

Through our work focusing on violence against women and girls, and our interactions with non-policing stakeholders, we know that there is a gap between what we are told is available and those who experience domestic abuse. This may be due to new initiatives being introduced that have not had the time to embed or make an impact.

We are also calling for police forces to hear the voices of victim-survivors and consider why they think there is a disconnect between their processes and approaches, and people feeling supported and trusting of the system.

Call to action: complainant / victim-survivor support

- Heads of PSDs should challenge themselves to consider if they are satisfied that they have sufficient processes in place to support PPDA victim-survivors.
- Heads of PSDs should review the training provided to complaint handlers to ensure an awareness of the complex nature of domestic abuse, the needs and vulnerabilities of victim-survivors, and the potential risks.
- Complaint handlers in PSD should have access to a list or database of local support services which they can use to signpost victim-survivors of domestic abuse to for help. This includes internal provisions available for police victim-survivors.
- Police forces should consider the accessibility of welfare and support services through the staff associations and union to both police suspects and police victims simultaneously, while managing any conflict of interest considerations.

Quality assurance processes

It is vital to public confidence that investigations into reports of PPDA are robust, impartial, timely and take account of the needs of the victim-survivor. The IOPC believes that having a strong quality assurance process in place is crucial to ensure PPDA investigations are monitored, and for learning to be shared. Any quality assurance process should begin with a force-wide culture of striving to learn and improve. We asked police forces what quality assurance processes they had in place to ensure investigations into PPDA are robust, impartial and instil public confidence. The responses to the survey show there is promising practice around quality assurance processes, particularly with independent scrutiny panels, but the picture is inconsistent.

! Call to action: quality assurance processes

- Heads of PSDs should assess whether they have robust quality assurance processes in place that are impartial and can critically challenge investigations into PPDA.
- Police forces should consider whether their force would benefit from implementing independent scrutiny panels, or similar.
- Heads of PSDs should consider whether quality assurance reviewers have the confidence and support to challenge poor PPDA investigations.

Managing Risk

PPDA carries with it specific risks owing to the complex nature of domestic abuse, the imbalance of power stemming from the perpetrator also being a person serving with the police, and their unique access to policing tools, knowledge and skills.

Added to that can be additional risks where the victim-survivor is also a person serving with the police, providing the perpetrator with additional opportunities to harass, control, manipulate and undermine a victim-survivor in the workplace.

When we asked police forces about their approach to risk management, we were told about various risk management strategies. The IOPC expects every case to be considered on its own merit when considering the management of risk. A considered and tailored approach should be adopted in each case, using the full range of tools available to the police. As part of this, we consider the monitoring of patterns of behaviour and background history to be fundamental to safeguarding current and potential future victim-survivors. For more subtle forms of domestic abuse, such as coercive and controlling behaviour, singular incidents may not at first appear significant or concerning, but when considered over a period of time and as part of a pattern of behaviour, the cumulative impact of that behaviour becomes apparent.

We also asked police forces about their policy on vetting and its role in identifying areas of vulnerability. An effective vetting regime helps to reassure the public that appropriate checks are conducted on individuals serving with the police.

Call to action: managing risk

- Heads of PSDs should critically analyse whether all appropriate steps are taken in every case to manage any real or perceived risks where a police officer or member of staff is accused of PPDA.
- Heads of PSDs should assess what steps have been taken to ensure that the College of Policing Vetting APP is followed. Where it is not routinely followed, clear plans should be put in place to change that.

Training and development

Having sufficiently trained staff within PSDs to respond to reports of PPDA is necessary to secure public confidence in the police response and deliver good quality investigations that take account of the complex nature of this type of abuse.

We wanted to understand what training and learning interventions staff within PSDs receive to enable them to fully understand PPDA, to support victim-survivors and to investigate reports with knowledge and expertise. The responses to our survey questions were varied and we were encouraged by the different learning interventions being applied.

However, this wasn't consistent across all the forces and, in some cases, respondents reported receiving no specialist training. We know there is more work to be done to upskill frontline officers to understand all forms of domestic abuse, particularly where there is no physical violence, and the importance of recording to establish patterns of behaviour. We would like training on avoiding victim blaming language to be increased, to ensure victim-survivors experiences are improved.

Providing training isn't a one-off process, it should be considered as the first part of the journey. We encourage police forces to think creatively about ways to share knowledge and expertise through the specialists within their force.

Call to action: training and development

- Heads of PSDs should review the current training and development provision available for PSD staff on domestic abuse, and consider whether it is sufficient and up-to-date.
- Heads of PSDs should satisfy themselves that they have the necessary knowledge and expertise in their teams to respond effectively to reports of PPDA.
- Police forces should consider whether domestic abuse training and development reaches frontline officers in a way that equips them to understand the different forms of domestic abuse and why reporting is essential to capture patterns of behaviour.

In conclusion

We want to continue working with forces to find solutions to the issues they face when responding to reports of PPDA. Within this report, we share the promising practice and new initiatives we found, so that police forces can learn from each other. We call on all police forces to satisfy themselves that they have the appropriate resources, skills and processes to effectively respond to PPDA.

We think one of the most important things we can do to support police forces is to issue learning and guidance to clarify expectations, drive up standards, and provide greater consistency. The IOPC will publish two guidance documents next year to bring together all our learning and insights from our focused work on violence against women and girls.

Thank you to the six police forces who gave their time to take part in the professional discussions: Durham Constabulary, Dyfed-Powys Police, Essex Police, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary, Lancashire Police and Lincolnshire Police.

I would also like to thank the Domestic Abuse Commissioner's Office who we consulted with on our findings and the Centre for Women's Justice for their unrelenting pursuit for justice and support for victim-survivors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Rowe'.

Amanda Rowe
Director of Operations
Strategic Lead: Violence Against Women and Girls

Our work on violence against women and girls

The IOPC has committed to a programme of work focused on violence against women and girls. This was prioritised as a result of increasing public concern about the police response to violence against women and girls and cultural attitudes in policing towards women and girls. A key focus of the work will address actions from the investigation into the Centre for Women's Justice super-complaint on police perpetrated domestic abuse. By focusing on our statutory function, to oversee the police complaints system, we aim to:

- improve trust and confidence in complainants and those who support them in the police response to violence against women and girls
- hold the police to account
- identify and share learning to improve policing practice
- ensure the public understand our role

Who we are

The Independent Office for Police Conduct is the police complaints watchdog. We are not the police and are completely independent of them. We set the standards for the police complaints system. We make sure the police are investigating complaints about their officers and staff properly. We also investigate the most serious and sensitive incidents involving the police ourselves.

Through our work, we hold the police to account when things go wrong, recommend changes to prevent the same mistakes happening again and promote high standards of policing. We use our evidence to drive improvements in police practices for the benefit of the public and the police. This will help achieve our vision for everyone to be able to have trust and confidence in policing.

Who is this information for?

This report is mainly for policing stakeholders and includes some technical language. A glossary is included to explain some of the terminology. This review aims to improve the policing response to police perpetrated domestic abuse reports and is aimed at complaint handling practitioners.

Background

In March 2020, the Centre for Women’s Justice (CWJ) submitted a super-complaint raising concerns about how police forces respond to cases of domestic abuse involving police officers or police staff. The investigation and the [2022 report on the super-complaint](#) found ‘systemic weaknesses’ in the way some police forces in England and Wales deal with allegations of police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA). It made several recommendations and actions to protect and support victims better, and to improve the quality of investigations. The IOPC committed to carrying out a targeted programme of oversight work into the police’s handling of PPDA cases.

In February 2024, we published our [case handling review report](#) where we examined 121 police complaint and conduct matter files where violence against women and girls was a factor. The aim of this review was to sample around 30% of the total cases involving PPDA. Owing to various problems with how reports of PPDA were received and recorded, there were insufficient PPDA cases available to review. The IOPC was concerned that professional standards departments (PSDs) were unable to provide an accurate picture of the number of PPDA cases reported within their force each year. As a result, the IOPC made a commitment to begin a separate project, focused on how police forces respond to PPDA reports.

The police response to violence against women and girls continues to receive increased scrutiny. Other policing regulatory bodies including the College of Policing (CoP), National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) have also shared the same focus. It is worth noting that the [Angiolini inquiry](#), established to investigate how an off-duty police officer was able to abduct, rape and murder a member of the public, is still ongoing.

Where we refer to ‘police perpetrated domestic abuse’, we are using the term to describe the overall **concept** of domestic abuse that is reported against a person serving with the police. When we refer to a ‘police suspect’, we mean the person serving with the police who has had an allegation of domestic abuse made against them.

Methodology

We know from our case handling review into violence against women and girls that it was difficult to identify PPDA files to use in our dip sampling. Through that review, we identified issues with how reports of PPDA are recorded and raised concerns about the data that was available at that time. As a result, this report is based on a survey sent to all PSDs followed up by professional discussions with six police forces to delve deeper into the themes.

Survey

We sent a detailed survey to all 43 police force PSDs asking 52 questions about their force's identification, handling and response to reports of PPDA, with a particular focus on the areas of concern arising from the CWJ super-complaint. The survey closed in April 2024. The aim of the survey was to better understand the current response to PPDA reports and any issues or barriers that PSDs face in handling them.

This is part of our oversight work to learn from current practice and to support forces to improve the experience of victim-survivors. We know that the climate in relation to violence against women and girls is continually changing. Having survey responses, as opposed to dip sampling case files, allowed us to evaluate the current picture, rather than what was relevant a year or so ago with policies and procedures that might have become outdated.

We received 57 responses to the survey, with some police forces submitting more than one response from people in different roles. Just four police forces did not respond. Almost half (49%) of those completing the survey were head or deputy heads of PSD. Just over a third of responses (35%) came from complaint handler or investigator roles in PSDs. The remainder came from support or office manager roles (14%), with a small percentage from violence against women and girls specialist roles (2%).

This is a summary report that identifies the main themes arising from the survey, grouping some questions into topic areas rather than reporting on all 52 questions individually. Of note, not all questions received an answer from each respondent. Therefore, in the analysis, the number of responses will not always add up to 57.

Professional discussions

The survey was followed by professional discussions with six police forces to delve deeper into the identification, recording and handling of PPDA matters. The professional discussions involved meetings between the IOPC and police force PSDs, where pre-defined questions were asked which were designed to challenge forces on their handling of PPDA, speak in more depth about new initiatives put in place, and identify any positive practice for sharing. In some instances, those in specialist domestic abuse related roles also attended.

The six forces were invited to be part of the professional discussions based on a number of factors such as location and police complaints data. We also considered forces with which we had not already worked closely with for the VAWG case handling review. Some forces were discounted because they were already involved in other IOPC projects. We are grateful to Durham Constabulary, Dyfed-Powys Police, Essex Police, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary, Lancashire Police and Lincolnshire Police for taking the time to be part of the additional discussions.

We emphasised to those taking part in the professional discussions that we were keen to identify and share learning from the handling of PPDA cases to improve policing practice and prevent future harm. The forces were asked to answer questions honestly, identifying barriers and areas for improvement, as opposed to what they thought might be a 'model' response. We are grateful for the candid and open discussions that were held.

Limitations

This report is an analysis of the survey responses and the professional discussions held. It provides insight into the practices and initiatives used in the police response to PPDA. By not sampling complaint and conduct matter files, we acknowledge that we have not tested what forces told us against the application of processes to PPDA cases. Instead, we asked questions in the survey and the professional discussions that were designed to challenge the forces and hold them to account. We asked forces to be open and honest, so we could understand the challenges and make valid recommendations for improvement.

Similarly, we have not tested the initiatives that the forces told us about. We are sharing them as an example of promising practice that other forces might benefit from. We are not suggesting they are initiatives that the IOPC has deemed to be 'best' practice.

The following pages feature selected free text or quotation responses from our survey. These are presented in this style.

Findings

Identification, reporting and recording

Reporting

To ensure that reports of PPDA are appropriately assessed and recorded by PSDs, we asked respondents under what circumstances (if any) a report of PPDA would not be referred to the PSD. This was a free text question to allow respondents to fully explain their answer, but we have categorised the main groups. Of the responses, 79% (45 out of 57) answered 'none'. Other responses included that the report was made to a different police force (5) or 'unsure' (4).

It is encouraging that the majority of respondents told us that PPDA reports would be sent to the PSD for appropriate assessment and action. However, we acknowledge that our survey was directed to PSDs and we have not assessed, through this research, whether all PPDA reports made to frontline officers are correctly recorded and referred to PSDs.

A recent report from the CWJ entitled *Police perpetrated domestic abuse: Has anything really changed since the 2020 super-complaint? (September 2024)*, found that victim-survivors of PPDA are still not being believed, or the abuse they report is often minimised or dismissed as one person's word against another. This means that reports are not being reported to PSDs and are not logged as complaint or conduct matters. The CWJ reports that coercive and controlling behaviour is dismissed as 'unpleasant behaviour' and victim-survivors are discouraged from reporting, being told it is very difficult to prove. This shows how frontline officers who attend domestic abuse incidents can have a limited understanding of the different forms of abuse. When officers dismiss reports of domestic abuse, not only are victim-survivors discouraged from reporting further abuse, leaving them vulnerable, there is also a significant impact on data collection.

Data on reports of PPDA is important to monitor a police officer's pattern of behaviour, for safeguarding and vetting purposes, and for police forces to understand the extent of the problem. The CWJ called for an institutional change to allow victim-survivors to have confidence about reporting. Through this survey and the professional discussions, we heard about how forces are improving their policing response, which is encouraging, but new initiatives need to translate into improved experiences for victim-survivors. Police forces need to ensure they are hearing the voices of victim-survivors and evaluating any new initiatives for impact, by asking victim-survivors if they are making a difference.

The College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council launched their National Framework for Delivery in February 2024 to improve the policing of violence

against women and girls. The framework, and accompanying [self-assessment template](#), is designed to offer guidance to police forces on how they can plan, resource and evaluate their work to keep women and girls safe. It adopts a '4P' approach to developing policing strategy:

- **Preparing** for violence against women and girls offending
- **Protecting** individuals, families, and communities,
- **Pursuing** perpetrators
- **Preventing** crime

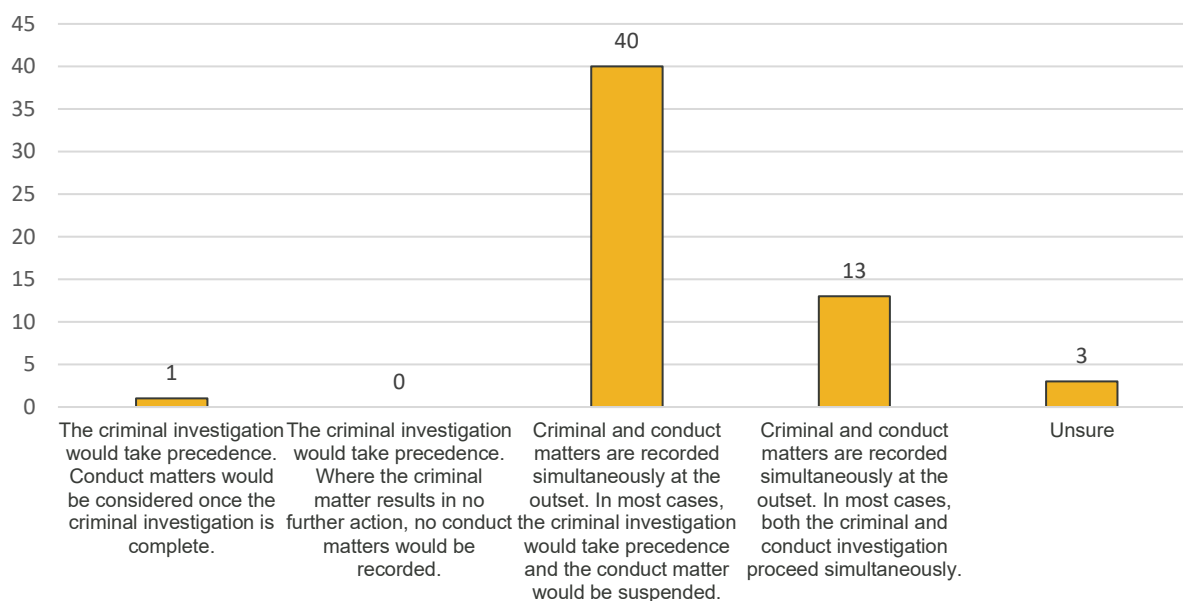
Crucial to the strategy is data recording and ensuring that all staff have the knowledge and skills to recognise police-perpetrated violence against women and girls. Under the 'Prepare' pillar, the framework commits that '*Policing has meaningful and consistent data collection, management and analysis to drive our response.*' The 'Protect' pillar states that policing should have '*the right capacity and capability to meet demand, including training and resources to enable them to tackle VAWG*'. The self-assessment template guides police forces through the expectations on them for tackling violence against women and girls and the national commitments required.

The IOPC highlights the importance of the National Framework for Delivery to help forces develop their strategy. As part of the framework, forces should consider what training, information and guidance frontline officers receive to understand the different forms of domestic abuse.

Associated criminal matters

Following our violence against women and girls case handling review in February 2024, we became aware of a practice where PPDA conduct matters were not being recorded until the end of the criminal investigation. We asked police forces about their practices in this survey. The majority of respondents said that the report of PPDA would be assessed and recorded for both criminal and conduct matters at the outset. The table on page 20 sets out the responses received.

Where a criminal investigation has started, which statement best describes how you treat any related conduct matters?



It is important that conduct matters are assessed at the outset and recorded for data capture purposes and monitoring of intelligence within PSDs. It is also crucial for identifying patterns of behaviour within a police officer's or employee's personal record. There will be cases where the appropriate authority decides to suspend handling a matter, where continuing would prejudice criminal proceedings. Forces should consider if measures can be put in place to reduce or remove the prejudice, and if appropriate, seek the views of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Recording

Regarding how and where a report of PPDA is recorded, we were told that in most cases (49 out of 57) the criminal and complaint or conduct matter would be recorded on the appropriate police systems (such as Centurion and crime systems) at the same time. This is important for data retrieval and monitoring patterns.

Recording was highlighted as a concern following the IOPC violence against women and girls case handling review. The review found that, in some forces, cases were first recorded on crime systems and only later on Centurion, meaning the complaint or conduct matter could not be found. No respondents to the survey told us that a report of PPDA would **only** be recorded on crime systems. Five respondents told us the report would be recorded on Centurion only, and three selected the option 'other'.

Assessment of complaint or conduct matters following a criminal investigation

Through our wider work on tackling violence against women and girls, we have been concerned that, in cases where a criminal matter results in a decision of no further action, the complaint or conduct matter is also automatically closed with a decision of no further action. This might happen without any separate assessment of the complaint or conduct matters identified and the proper application of the different standards of proof for a complaint or conduct matter (balance of probabilities).

In this survey, we asked police forces about their approach to a complaint or conduct matter where a criminal investigation results in a determination of no further action. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents (51 of 57) told us that the complaint or conduct matter would be thoroughly investigated, regardless of the criminal outcome. Six respondents told us that the complaint or conduct matter will sometimes, but not always, result in a decision of no further action, but not necessarily because of an automatic process. This could be that the complaint or conduct matter, properly considered, also resulted in the same outcome. The survey responses tell us that the automatic dismissal of a complaint or conduct matter following a criminal investigation appears to be historical practice. We would like to see evidence of this coming through in cases in the future.

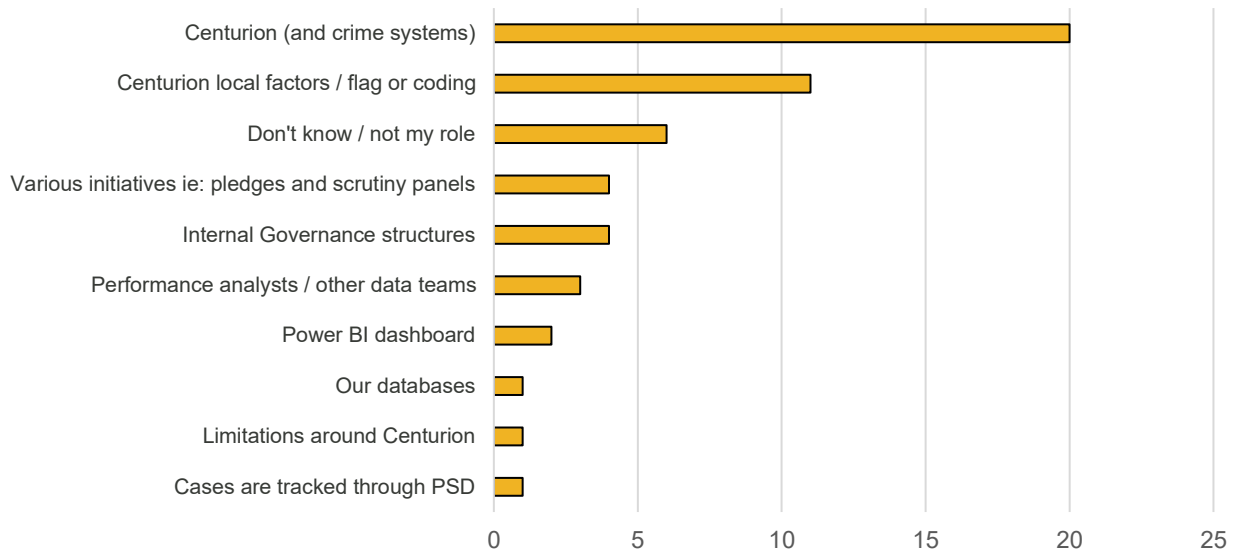
Data monitoring and reporting

A crucial part of the police complaints system, and in particular being able to respond to the national threat of violence against women and girls, is to be able to report an overall picture in England and Wales. We challenged police forces on the mechanisms in place to accurately report on the number and nature of PPDA reports through a free text question in our survey. This enabled detailed and comprehensive answers. We have categorised these in the diagram below.

The majority of forces stated that Centurion (alongside crime systems such as Niche) allowed for reporting of cases. This was via a mixture of a PPDA Centurion national factor, introduced in June 2024 (a tag applied on Centurion), or by a 'local' Centurion factor (a tag added individually by a police force). Factors on Centurion allow for categorising, searching and retrieval of cases. The PPDA national factor was not in place for the data period when the IOPC conducted its violence against women and girls case file review in 2023, which impacted on the ability to isolate and retrieve PPDA cases.

Some forces told us about new reporting tools they are developing such as Microsoft Power BI dashboards (software that allows a user to connect unrelated data sources) for more intelligent data in this area.

Mechanisms to accurately report on the scale and nature of PPDA



We have become aware that a large number of forces have not yet upgraded their Centurion software to the latest version, which includes the introduction of the PPDA national factor. This is disappointing and adversely affects data collection. While we understand that many forces can isolate and identify PPDA cases through a 'local' Centurion factor, having the latest case management software is crucial for consistent data reporting. The IOPC expects that forces upgrade to the latest version of Centurion as soon as possible to ensure consistent and accurate data collection.

“A local PPDA factor is currently being applied to all PPDA cases, so they can easily be identified. Cases are [quality assured] by supervision to ensure the correct tags are added. PSD also keep a manual excel spreadsheet covering all criminal investigations that are conducted by the Professional Standards Department which is clearly marked with PPDA cases. Following the Centurion update in June, the national PPDA factor will be introduced which will replace our local factor.”

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales carried out a data collection exercise in September 2024 as part of their review of domestic abuse and the criminal justice system. Following a data request, we understand that almost every force was able to provide the required data on recorded PPDA complaint and conduct matters. It is encouraging that most forces were able to identify the relevant cases, through whichever tagging methods they are using, and provide that data

relatively quickly. This shows a marked improvement in recording practices since the IOPC requested data for its case handling review in 2023.

“Every PPDA case being dealt with in force is now tracked through PSD to ensure that a timely and effective investigation by CID is being supervised and resourced accordingly. The Head of PSD holds a bi-weekly meeting to discuss these cases to ensure that appropriate progression is being made, as well as ensuring that safeguarding and welfare are properly considered.”

Call to action

- Police forces should consider what training, information and guidance frontline officers receive to understand the different forms of domestic abuse. All those responding to reports of PPDA, whether they be frontline officers, supervisors or colleagues, should be aware of the more subtle forms of coercive and controlling behaviour and the importance of recording all reports for data capture, safeguarding and monitoring purposes.
- All police forces should move to the latest version of Centurion software as soon as possible to ensure consistent and accurate data recording.
- Heads of PSDs should satisfy themselves they have sufficient and accurate reporting mechanisms in place to be able to understand the PPDA picture in their police force.
- PSDs should actively and routinely use data from Centurion to monitor rates of PPDA and police perpetrated violence against women and girls to identify patterns of behaviour and officers of concern.

Reporting – police victim-survivors

We know that victim-survivors of PPDA, who are also serving with the police, face a unique set of barriers to reporting their abuse. Along with the barriers that already exist for reporting domestic abuse, police victim-survivors may feel that because of their role and increased awareness of domestic abuse, this should not happen to them, or they should know what to do. Some may worry about repercussions at work and colleagues having access to their personal information. The investigation into the CWJ super-complaint in 2022 found concerns over a lack of confidentiality and

'gossiping' at work, ostracism, and damage to career prospects as additional potential barriers.

We asked police forces what systems, if any, are in place for police employees to report PPDA. This was a free text question to allow respondents to explain the range of options available. We are encouraged by the number of different options available to police victim-survivors and the ongoing work to raise awareness of inappropriate behaviours among staff. Alongside the usual routes open to the public (such as 999, 101 or Crimestoppers), respondents told us about:

- confidential reporting lines
- reporting to supervisors or directly to PSDs
- various communications or publications to all staff encouraging colleagues to come forward
- campaigns aimed at 'calling out' behaviours and being an 'upstander' rather than a 'bystander'
- workshops, training and awareness sessions about behaviours to look out for, how to report and what will happen if they do report
- domestic abuse pledges which set out what victim-survivors can expect if they report a matter, including police victim-survivors
- domestic abuse champions, domestic abuse liaison officers, staff networks, peer support groups, welfare support services
- ensuring impartiality through conflict-of-interest declarations

“As part of the cultural training and encouraging staff to become upstanders, staff are educated on the signs and symptoms of a toxic team culture and the requirement that they do not tolerate discrimination, victimisation or any disadvantageous treatment against anyone who makes a report of unprofessional behaviour or wrongdoing.”

We acknowledge that for a victim-survivor experiencing or having experienced PPDA, the barriers mentioned may still be present, regardless of the routes open to report. Police forces should not be complacent and instead, continue their efforts to secure confidence from police victim-survivors by showing a robust response to PPDA.

Through our work on violence against women and girls, we know that some police victim-survivors do not feel supported because the police force 'doesn't want to take sides'. In every case, police forces must have a robust response to reports of PPDA and provide support to police victim-survivors to build their trust in the system. This, in turn, will show others in the force that reports of PPDA are taken seriously and that police victim-survivors will be properly supported.

“Communication and transparency are key. The victim is given the choice and power and if they do not feel comfortable with a particular person being involved in the investigation, all efforts will be made to resolve this.”

We asked police forces what steps they took to mitigate any real, or perceived, repercussions at work for police victim-survivors of PPDA. The majority of the respondents spoke about strict confidentiality processes where PPDA cases are ‘locked down’ and only visible on police systems to a small number of individuals. Another theme in the responses was around having a robust, zero tolerance approach to any victimisation, bullying or discrimination.

One force spoke about supporting victim-survivors to remain in work, but where required, compassionate leave would be granted to avoid the victim-survivor being on sick-leave. Another noted that they would aim to keep the victim-survivor in their current role and consider restrictions, suspension or movement of location for the police suspect to avoid any geographical overlap with the victim-survivor while at work.

The CWJ super-complaint referred to policing culture and the expectation that police leaders create a culture where reports of PPDA are always responded to appropriately. The IOPC agrees that a culture change is at the heart of improving the experiences of victim-survivors. We know that police victim-survivors fear being ostracised or that their career will be damaged if they report PPDA. Police forces need to demonstrate to their staff that victim-survivors can have confidence in reporting PPDA and that the culture within forces supports this. While things like pledges are important to underpin a force’s principles around PPDA, victim-survivors need to see real changes in their everyday experiences of police culture, with strong messages that PPDA will not be tolerated and that victim-survivors do not have to fear repercussions at work if they report domestic abuse.

Call to action

- Police forces should challenge themselves to consider the experiences of police victim-survivors in reporting PPDA and think critically about ways to remove the barriers to reporting.
- Police forces should demonstrate to their staff that they have a robust approach to investigations so that victim-survivors see real change and can have confidence in reporting.
- Police forces should engage with police victim-survivors and the organisations supporting them, to properly understand any real or perceived concerns and requirements to meet their individual needs.

Initial response and assessment

In general terms, where a complaint is received into a PSD, the appropriate authority has a duty to assess the seriousness of the matter and decide how it will respond. This includes whether the matter should be recorded under Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002* and if it should be handled otherwise than by investigation or investigated. Complaints can be handled outside of the requirements of Schedule 3 where a prompt and simple resolution is anticipated, such as providing an explanation.

Where a complaint is recorded under Schedule 3, the legislation sets out that certain complaints must be investigated. Those that don't require investigation can be handled otherwise than by investigation (OTBI) where complaint handlers can be creative about what resolution might be reasonable.

A complaint must be investigated where there is an indication that a person serving with the police may have committed a criminal offence or behaved in a manner that would justify the bringing of disciplinary proceedings. It also must be investigated if there is an indication that there has been an infringement of article 2 or 3 rights under the *European Convention on Human Rights*.

The IOPC considers that **all** reports of PPDA that amount to a complaint:

- **Must** be recorded under schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*
- **Must** be investigated
- **Must** have the IOPC as the relevant review body (see paragraph 18.5 of the [IOPC Statutory Guidance](#)).

Domestic abuse is defined in section 1 of the *Domestic Abuse Act 2021*. Any report of physical or sexual abuse, violent or threatening behaviour or controlling or coercive behaviour must be assessed as meeting the requirements for recording under Schedule 3 and investigated because those behaviours amount to a criminal offence.

The other behaviours listed in section 1 of the *Domestic Abuse Act 2021* are economic abuse, psychological, emotional or other abuse. Given the wide range of behaviours that could amount to the criminal offence of controlling and coercive behaviour, any of these behaviours could potentially amount to that offence. It is for this reason that the IOPC asserts that **all** reports of PPDA **must** be regarded as necessary to record and investigate.

A person serving with the police is unable to make a complaint about a person serving in their own police force. In these circumstances, a report of PPDA should be dealt with as a conduct matter. Where a conduct matter is received, the appropriate authority must decide whether it is recordable. The IOPC considers that **all** PPDA reports are recordable conduct matters on the basis that it is conduct whose gravity or other exceptional circumstances makes it appropriate to record it (Regulation 7(1)(f) of the *Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020*). The fact that all PPDA allegations are potentially criminal, and many are likely to engage article 3, together with the government focus on domestic abuse as part of their strategy to combat violence against women and girls, demonstrates the gravity of the issue.

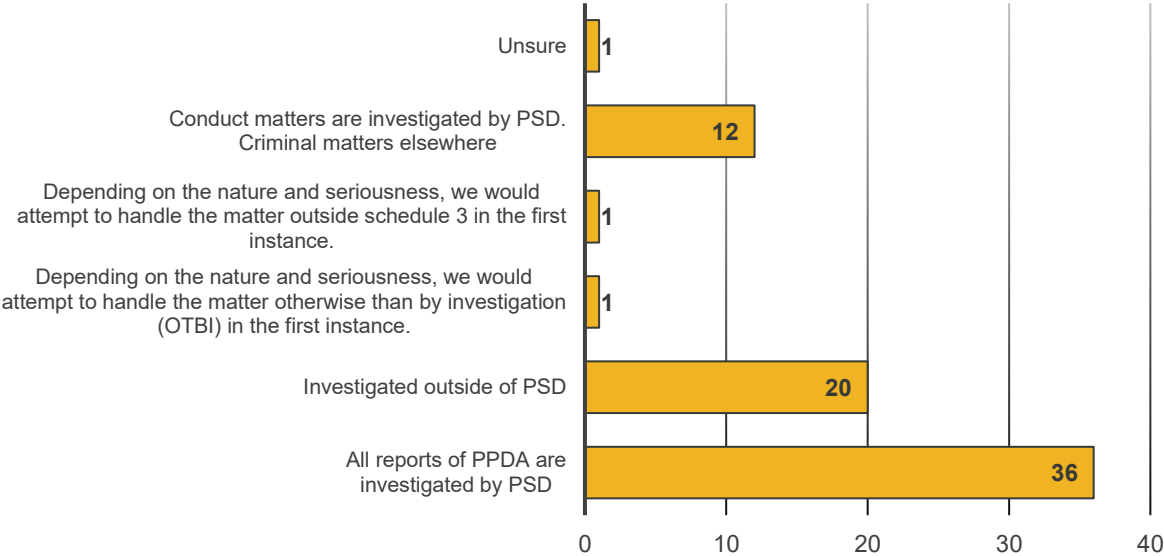
The appropriate authority must then decide if there is a requirement to investigate. There is no **statutory** obligation to investigate a PPDA recordable conduct matter in the same way that there is with a complaint of PPDA. However, given that the substance of a PPDA recordable conduct matter is the same as a complaint of PPDA, the IOPC considers that all PPDA recordable conduct matters should be investigated. Once a decision has been made to investigate, that investigation **must** take place under Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*. A victim-survivor who is also a person serving with the police, should be treated as an interested person and entitled to information and updates about the investigation.

We were keen to understand how PSDs assess and respond to reports of PPDA. When we asked police forces about how a report of PPDA would be dealt with, nearly all respondents told us that it would be investigated. We accept that a **criminal** investigation into domestic abuse will often require a specialist response from those departments with the relevant skills and expertise to manage the criminal investigation. However, it is important that PSDs maintain a level of supervision and control of any complaint or conduct matter handling. The table on page 28 shows the range of responses received. This was a 'tick all that apply' question and so the responses do not add up to 100 percent.

The majority of reports are investigated within PSDs. Twenty of the respondents said that PPDA would be investigated outside of the PSD, however, it is not clear whether this is in reference to the criminal investigation or the conduct / complaint matter.

One force answered ‘yes’ to considering handling a PPDA report otherwise than by investigation or even outside of Schedule 3 (not formally recorded). It is concerning that this approach is being taken in response to such a serious matter across policing and we are working with the force involved to raise our concerns.

Which statement best describes how a PPDA report would be dealt with?



“[PPDA] should all be dealt with by PSD; so criminal and conduct is seamless but we need the expertise and resource”.

Some forces told us that they were in the process of moving to a model where all reports of PPDA, including the criminal matter, are investigated by the PSD. This reflects what we have heard in the professional discussions and shows the level of change in this area. These forces said they are seeing many benefits to this approach already, including improved timeliness, a seamless investigation between the criminal and conduct matter, and a better experience for the victim-survivor - as they only need to engage with one department or investigator. As these models represent a fairly new change, it will take some time to see any improvement in the cases handled by these forces.

Spotlight on...

PSDs handling PPDA in its entirety

One force told us about their PSD structure and their move to handle all reports of PPDA, including the criminal investigation, within PSD. They achieved this by upskilling staff from level 1 of the Professionalising Investigations Programme (PIP 1) to PIP 2 level accreditation on serious and complex investigations. This has given staff the skills to handle not only the conduct matter, but also the criminal investigation. The two elements are handled simultaneously where possible, with no *automatic* suspension of the conduct matter because of links with a criminal investigation. Before the restructure, the criminal element of a PPDA investigation was first handled by another team on division and the conduct matter was handled at the conclusion, by the PSD.

The leaders in the team come from a public protection background and have the relevant skills and experience to supervise domestic abuse investigations and support victim-survivors, including handling any safeguarding matters. Where a report of domestic abuse perpetrated by a police officer is made, the police suspect is immediately suspended or removed from public duties. The victim-survivor is supported by an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), regardless of the level of risk.

As a result, the PSD reported that timeliness has improved by removing the handover period from division to PSD and by removing duplication of effort. It explained that, in turn, this is improving the service provided to victim-survivors and enables them to build a rapport with one (PSD) investigator. It removes the additional trauma that might be felt by victim-survivors by reliving their experiences for both elements of the investigation. The criminal and the conduct elements are investigated by the same investigators and the process for both are explained to the victim-survivor at the same time, as the case develops. This force explained to us that it invests time in supporting the victim-survivor and building their confidence in the investigation, being able to demonstrate independence via a professional standards investigation.

Having a model where PSDs have the resource and the expertise to respond to all reports of PPDA, including taking ownership of the criminal matter, represents promising practice. We would encourage forces to consider this approach where possible. However, we acknowledge that PSDs will have different funding, resources and expertise and so this approach may not be possible in every force.

Where it is not, the IOPC expects PSDs to adopt a model where they can be confident that their response to PPDA is robust, including having sufficient monitoring of criminal cases dealt with outside of PSDs. Complaint handling staff within PSDs

should have access to relevant experts and experience within their force that they can draw upon for advice.

“Since 1 January 2023 PSD have taken on all criminal allegations of PPDA in respect of police officers and police staff. All new staff into PSD have been recruited from a safeguarding / vulnerability background and have experience in dealing with domestic abuse.

Professional Standards Department have worked alongside our domestic abuse [victims] services to create a dedicated service for victims of PPDA where it has been agreed that they will be provided with the services of a dedicated Independent Domestic Abuse Advisor or Independent Sexual Abuse Advisor regardless of the risk level of the incident in question”.

“Although the PPDA (within PSD) team has only been in operation for 6 months, the initial assessment is that it is resulting in more timely and robust investigations, criminal justice outcomes and significantly better victim satisfaction. We have a dedicated PPDA support officer who both supports and signposts victims as well as attending initial hearings / court”.



Call to action

- Heads of PSDs should review their initial assessment processes to ensure that **all** reports of PPDA are recorded under Schedule 3 of the *Police Reform Act 2002*.
- Heads of PSDs should ensure that all reports of PPDA receive a robust response and are not subject to handling otherwise than by investigation.
- Heads of PSDs should consider whether moving to a model where all PPDA reports, including criminal matters, are handled within PSD is feasible. Where it is not, they should satisfy themselves that sufficient supervision and monitoring is in place for matters handled outside their PSD.

Ensuring impartial and independent investigations

Conflicts of interest

We know from the investigation into the CWJ super-complaint in 2022, and their more recent report in 2024, that confidence in the police response to PPDA can be affected where those working on the case have some connection to the police suspect (or the victim-survivor, where they are a person serving with the police). The CWJ super-complaint investigation found that force policies do not always provide strong enough guidance to prevent those knowing the suspect or victim-survivor from working on a PPDA case. Also, safeguards to ensure and demonstrate an impartial investigation were not consistently applied, such as completing formal conflict of interest declarations on each case.

In our violence against women and girls case handling review, we recommended that conflict of interest declarations should be recorded **as standard** on every violence against women and girls case to reassure complainants / victim-survivors of the suitability of the appointed complaint handler. Introducing this process is simple, not costly and one that all police forces should follow as a minimum to show independence.

In this survey, we asked all forces how confident they were (if at all), that their force policy on conflicts of interest adequately identifies and manages conflicts, particularly on PPDA. In 89% of the responses received (51 of 57), forces were very, or fairly, confident. One force said that they were not at all confident. We will be working with them to discuss what examples of positive practice we can share from other forces.

Survey responses, alongside our professional discussions with forces, suggests that forces are aware of their obligation to ensure an impartial and independent

investigation. Police forces are telling us that the picture in relation to managing conflicts of interest has improved since the investigation into the CWJ super-complaint. However, in their recent report, the CWJ found that **‘lack of independence is a fundamental concern for almost all of the victim-survivors of PPDA we have spoken to’**. They spoke to victim-survivors who reported having their cases dealt with by officers with open links to the police suspect.

We restate our recommendation to forces to include a conflict of interest declaration as the basic standard for all violence against women and girls and PPDA cases, alongside considering impartiality more broadly.

Conflict of interest considerations need to be a meaningful process where the force considers how it can achieve independence. It should not be a simple ‘tick box’ exercise, where a complaint handler declares whether they have worked directly with the police suspect before. The force should also consider whether there is a likelihood, where known, that the complaint handler may work with the police suspect in the future, and how this might have influence over the direction of their career and their handling of the case.

External force investigations








In the super-complaint, the CWJ called for an external force to always lead a PPDA investigation in an effort to secure the trust and confidence of the victim-survivor. This point was repeated in CWJ’s recent 2024 report, based on the ongoing concerns raised by victim-survivors.

We recognise that there are some practical barriers to external force investigations, and concerns were raised by policing stakeholders around having a blanket policy. Within the professional discussions we held, all six police forces agreed that external force investigations do not provide a guaranteed way of improving the quality of an investigation.

They told us that external force investigations can add delays and, in some cases, provide a reduced quality of investigation than they would have provided. They have experienced difficulties in finding an external force to take on an investigation, particularly where cases are complex and, therefore, lengthy. Resources are an issue across forces, and we were told that an external force investigation might be a lower priority when forces already have a large caseload. Some forces, however, told us they have good local agreements that have worked well.

In this survey, we asked in what circumstances forces would consider using an outside force to investigate a report of PPDA. The variety of responses are outlined below.

Which, if any, of the following circumstances would you consider using an outside force to investigate a report of PPDA? Please select all that apply.

Answer choices			Response percent	Response total
1	Where the complainant / victim-survivor requests it		48.21%	27
2	Only where there is substantial risk of a conflict of interest		64.29%	36
3	Where the allegations are so serious, it is necessary to maintain public confidence		51.79%	29
4	Where there is significant media interest in the case		25.00%	14
5	Where the report of PPDA involves a police victim-survivor		14.29%	8
6	In most cases – we have an agreement with another force and most PPDA cases are investigated there		3.57%	2
7	Other (please specify):		30.36%	17
			answered	56
			skipped	2

The College of Policing recently updated its authorised professional practice (APP) on domestic abuse investigations. Specific content on PPDA can be found under leadership, strategic oversight and management. In a sub-heading entitled ‘Specific management considerations when dealing with police perpetrators of domestic abuse’, it says, *“forces should have plans in place to ensure PPDA allegations are investigated (both in terms of the criminal investigation and misconduct response) by someone with no prior connection to any of those involved in the allegations”*. It adds that it may be appropriate to refer a case for external force investigation when:

- “there are concerns that truly independent investigators cannot be found in force. For example, in smaller forces or in cases involving a suspect who, due to seniority or length of service, is well known in force
- victim trust and confidence cannot be secured another way”

“Local plans should include procedures to mitigate any unintended consequences to the speed and quality of the investigation and/or victim engagement in the investigative process that may be caused by referring a case to an external force for investigation.”

The IOPC supports this approach. Police forces should ensure they have local practices in place to meet the requirements of the APP that specifically address the practical barriers explained to us. Forces should consider the needs of victim-survivors to secure trust and confidence in the investigation.

In response to public concern about insufficient independence in the handling of PPDA reports, and also in rape and serious sexual offences, the IOPC has started work to explore opportunities for increasing independence at various stages of the complaints and misconduct process. This will inform the scope of our transformation programme to adapt the way we work to meet the needs of those who use our services. The work will look at our operational processes and decision making, the training provided to IOPC staff, independent scrutiny of police force investigations, and communication with victim-survivors. We expect to share more about this work in Spring 2025.



Call to action

- Conflict of interest declarations should be recorded on all violence against women and girls cases, including PPDA. Where this doesn't currently happen in your force, Heads of PSDs should introduce a process immediately.
- At the start of an investigation, Heads of PSDs should be satisfied that they have considered whether the investigation is truly independent and they have given consideration to the views of the victim-survivor.
- Heads of PSDs should ensure the College of Policing authorised professional practice is followed for appointing an external force to investigate.

Complainant / victim-survivor support

Initial contact

We asked forces what response a victim-survivor initially receives when a report of PPDA is made by a member of the public. Fifty-six percent (32) said the victim-survivor would be asked how they wished to be communicated with and 33% (19) said the victim-survivor would be contacted and offered a face-to-face meeting with

the complaint handler. Other responses included contacting the victim-survivor over the phone or via email to discuss.

It is important that a victim-survivor receives early contact about their report of PPDA. They should have the opportunity to discuss it, indicate how they would like to proceed and be updated, and discuss what support they need. This initial contact is key to identifying any immediate safeguarding concerns, vulnerabilities and need for ongoing support. It also helps the complaint handler understand more about the PPDA behaviour.

Supporting victim-survivors

We asked police forces what response would be triggered to support a victim-survivor when a report of PPDA is received. The table below sets out the range of responses received, both for victim-survivors who are members of the public, and those who are also serving with the police.

Where a report of PPDA is received, which, if any, of the following specialist responses or considerations are triggered by PSD? Please select all that apply.					
		Member of the public		Person serving with the police	
Answer choices		Response percent	Response total	Response percent	Response total
1	A specially trained complaint handler would be allocated to the case	41%	24	40%	23
2	An assessment would be made of the safety of the victim-survivor and where applicable, safeguarding measures would be put in place, either by PSD or via referral to a specialist police team	76%	44	77%	44
3	An assessment would be made of the vulnerability of the victim-survivor and where applicable, signposting to specialist support services would be provided	64%	37	72%	41
4	With the victim-survivor's agreement, a referral would be made to local support services / charity organisations	71%	41	72%	41
5	With the victim-survivor's agreement, a referral would be made to an independent domestic violence advisor (IDVA) who we work closely with	69%	40	72%	41

Where a report of PPDA is received, which, if any, of the following specialist responses or considerations are triggered by PSD? Please select all that apply.

6	<i>For persons serving with the police only:</i> With the victim-survivor's agreement, a referral would be made to internal welfare support provisions	N/A	N/A	72%	41
7	Victim-survivors of PPDA are responded to in the same way as any other complainant	19%	11	25%	14
8	Other (please specify):	31%	18	26%	15

It is promising to see that in many of the responses, victim-survivor needs and vulnerabilities are being considered and support services are engaged. We note that the answers to the question are largely the same when comparing whether the report is from a member of the public, or if the victim-survivor is also a person serving with the police.

It is concerning that in 11 of the responses about members of the public (eight police forces) and 14 of the responses about persons serving with the police (10 police forces), the respondent selected that victim-survivors of PPDA receive the same response as any other complainant. This fails to acknowledge the nuances of domestic abuse cases and the complex factors that will affect the vulnerability and welfare of victim-survivors. When asked why, five respondents said there was no requirement for a specialist response, four said they do not have the resources in their PSD, and one said that they were unable to signpost to local organisations as they didn't know who the relevant organisations were.

It is important to note that, of those 10 police forces that selected that 'victim-survivors of PPDA receive the same response as any other complainant', five of those also selected a number of other options available, showing that other forms of specialist support are provided. It appears that this option, in those five forces, was selected as part of a range of options available.

We expect the remaining five forces to consider their approach to victim-survivor welfare and put processes in place to identify, signpost and support victim-survivors of PPDA and violence against women and girls. Staff within PSDs should have sufficient awareness of the complex nature of domestic abuse, the barriers to reporting and the vulnerabilities of victim-survivors. This includes a basic awareness of the increased risks caused by reporting their abuser. PSDs can build this awareness by providing training and creating opportunities to share experience and knowledge. Where complaint handlers in PSD are not sufficiently experienced, we expect them to know where they can seek advice and guidance within their force and how to signpost victim-survivors to support services.

“We have a local arrangement with our local support provider and [county] provider that a PPDA victim survivor can be supported out of county should they have concerns about local referral”.

In the majority of responses where the respondent chose ‘other’, they referred to the welfare of victim-survivors being the responsibility of another department. This is when a criminal investigation is led by a specialist team. These teams included domestic abuse investigation units, public protection units, criminal investigation departments (CID) and domestic abuse support officers. Respondents noted that these departments / individuals have the specialist resources and skills to assess vulnerability, respond to safeguarding matters and support the victim-survivor through the investigation.

The IOPC considers that victim-survivors of domestic abuse require specialist support. Where that support is most effectively provided via another specialist team, outside of the PSD, there should be a clear plan in place to provide that support and meet the needs of the victim-survivor. It should be clearly documented on the complaint or conduct matter file, who is responsible for victim-survivor care. The Code of Practice for victims of crime sets out the minimum standards that should be applied to victims of crime. PSDs should note that victims are considered eligible for ‘enhanced rights’ if they are a victim of domestic abuse or sexual offences (among others) and more likely to require specialist assistance. This report does not seek to repeat the rights of victims as set out in the code, but police forces are reminded of the requirement to adhere to the code at all times when supporting victim-survivors of PPDA.

“We would also look to include line managers too (with [the] complainant’s consent) as they can provide vital support in the workplace. It is recognised that police victims are reluctant to report for a number of reasons, seen as weakness, not believed, the information won’t stay confidential. We are alive to this and put measures in place to mitigate”.

We know from our work with non-policing stakeholders that victim-survivors continue to report a negative experience when reporting PPDA to the police. We know that part of that experience includes the support they receive when they do make a report. We asked police forces about what specialist support services are available to PPDA victim-survivors. The themes coming out of this free text question included:

- independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) and independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs)

- police welfare officers and Police Federation / Unison support for police victims
- support and counselling for police victims through an internal employee assistance programme
- local and national domestic abuse specialist support services
- specialist police officers trained in supporting victims and obtaining evidence through victim accounts i.e. victim engagement officers, domestic abuse support officers
- victim advice line
- (internally) domestic abuse survivor support networks and staff networks
- domestic abuse champions

Some forces said there were considerable local support services available which were too numerous to list. In some areas, the services available range from charities or support services to internal police force provisions. It is crucial that those supporting victim-survivors, including complaint handlers, can signpost them to suitable services and have information readily available to do so. Victim-survivors may also need some support or encouragement to access services. This is particularly helpful when they are trying to navigate related matters, such as housing issues or parental custody arrangements, alongside coercive and controlling behaviour that might prevent them from accessing support.

“For internal victims of PPDA the Constabulary has an existing Employee Domestic Abuse supporting procedures which signpost individuals and line managers towards pathways of support, and provide guidance for supervisors who supervise members of staff who may have been a victim of PPDA, and may receive first disclosures of such offences during welfare meetings etc”

The College of Policing and NPCC National Framework for Delivery is supportive of a local partnership approach to support victim-survivors. Under the ‘protect’ pillar, the framework states that, *“Policing prioritises identifying VAWG victims and their needs with an intersectional approach through high quality responses, where we listen, engage and have effective local partnerships that mitigate risk and support victims”*. The self-assessment template includes an expectation that call handlers, attending officers, investigators, safeguarding or neighbourhood teams offer advice and referrals to local VAWG organisations. It is crucial that those responding to PPDA are aware of, and signpost victim-survivors to, all available local service provisions.

“We have a dedicated witness engagement officer assigned to PSD to better support victims of PPDA as they have greater knowledge of the processes”.

We asked the same question about the availability of specialist support, specifically for victim-survivors of PPDA who are also serving with the police. In most cases, the answers mirrored those for members of the public, with some forces explaining that the service provided would be the same. Also, some forces referred to their internal welfare provisions (such as occupational health support), support from line managers, and from staff associations and unions.

“The specialist service is required because victim-survivors of police perpetrated domestic abuse face increased and unique challenges, due to the power imbalance caused by the profession of the perpetrator. There are additional challenges faced by police force employees who experience impact in both their personal and professional lives.

The qualified Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) specialists, will provide emotional and practical support to encourage victim-survivors to reach out, responding to their wider needs. The service will provide advocacy through the criminal, civil and if appropriate, the police internal processes.

The specialists can also talk through any issues with supervisors or police colleagues who have had disclosures made to them.

The impartial and confidential service is being delivered by a partnership of ...domestic abuse services”

 **Spotlight on.....****Staff associations and trade union support for police victims**

There was a mixed response within the professional discussions about staff associations or the trade union providing support to victim-survivors who are also serving with the police. Some forces discussed a conflict of interest in providing support to police victims, when the staff association / union will often already be representing the police suspect. It was promising that during two of the professional discussions, respondents told us that it was not an issue in their force to represent or provide support to both the police suspect and the police victim. They spoke about 'confidential corridors' to avoid any conflicts of interest and being able to successfully provide services to both parties, without jeopardising the case or disclosing confidential or inappropriate information.

The staff association and union can often be the source of a range of supportive welfare provisions to officers and staff. The IOPC considers that it is not appropriate for those provisions to only be available to support a police suspect, and not a police-victim at their time of need. Police forces should consider ways to make services and welfare support available to both parties, managing any possible conflicts. Police forces can contact the IOPC for information from the forces that have implemented this approach.

Call to action

- Heads of PSDs should challenge themselves to consider if they are satisfied that they have sufficient processes in place to support victim-survivors of PPDA.
- Heads of PSDs should review the training provided to complaint handlers to ensure an awareness of the complex nature of domestic abuse, the needs and vulnerabilities of victim-survivors, and the potential risks.
- Complaint handlers in PSD should have access to a list or database of local support services which they can use to signpost victim-survivors of domestic abuse to for help. This includes internal provisions available for police victim-survivors.
- Police forces should consider accessibility of welfare and support services through the staff associations and union to both police suspects and police victims simultaneously, while managing any conflict of interest considerations.

Quality assurance processes

We asked police forces what quality assurance processes they had in place to ensure their investigations into PPDA are robust, impartial and instil public confidence. The themes coming out of this free text question included:

- regular (i.e. weekly or monthly) reviews by supervisors within PSDs
- quality assurance reviews by senior officers impartial to the investigation such as Heads of PSD or independent scrutiny panels
Note: A number of forces told us they were considering or were implementing independent scrutiny panels and so this looks set to increase.
- regular (i.e. monthly) scrutiny meetings where cases are reviewed and discussed with relevant specialists such as the public protection unit.
- dip sampling of files
- expectations set out in domestic abuse policies or pledges to respond to PPDA

Other respondents listed parts of the investigative process, including identifying conflicts of interest, suspension of officers to protect victim-survivors and members of the public, referral to the IOPC, and referral to specialist teams to support victim-survivors.

It is important that those carrying out any quality assurance role have a thorough understanding of domestic abuse and the factors around police perpetrated behaviour and imbalance of power. Those carrying out reviews of PPDA investigations should have the confidence to challenge inadequate investigations.

The information provided in response to this question shows that forces have considered quality assurance processes and how to instil confidence. We welcome forces to get in touch with us if they would like to discuss strengthening their quality assurance processes. We may be able to put them in touch with other forces who have shown promising practice in this area. We also encourage forces to read and keep up-to-date with the College of Policing's smarter practice examples, which share learning and activity from other police forces.

Spotlight on.....

Independent scrutiny panels

Within the professional discussions, one police force told us about their initiative to introduce domestic abuse scrutiny panels as part of their quality assurance processes. The scrutiny panel is made up of policing and non-policing stakeholders who discuss domestic abuse cases involving either a police perpetrator or police victim. The panel provides independent assessment of the case, steers direction, monitors progress, and identifies individual and organisational good practice and learning.

The panel, chaired by a Chief Superintendent, sits monthly and cases are discussed anonymously.

This police force has noted an improvement in the quality of PPDA investigations and an increase in the support for victim-survivors. It explained that the process also allows for and promotes continuous organisational learning and improvement.







Since holding the professional discussion, this example was shared by the College of Policing as one of its smarter practice examples. You can read more on the College of Policing website.

Call to action

- Heads of PSDs should assess whether they have robust quality assurance processes in place that are impartial and can critically challenge investigations into PPDA.
- Police forces should consider whether their force would benefit from implementing independent scrutiny panels, or similar.
- Heads of PSDs should consider whether quality assurance reviewers have the confidence and support to challenge poor PPDA investigations.

Managing risk

Where an officer or member of police staff is a subject of a PPDA investigation, what steps do you take to manage any risks? Please select all that apply.

Answer choices	Response percent	Response total
1 The police suspect would usually be suspended to protect members of the public	 41.07%	23
2 In some situations, suspension would be considered, but it would depend on the circumstances	 71.43%	40
3 The police suspect would be placed on restricted duties	 32.14%	18
4 In some situations, restricting duties would be considered but it would depend on the circumstances	 51.79%	29
5 In the majority of cases, suspension or restriction is not required for PPDA cases	 1.79%	1
6 Where the victim-survivor is a police officer, we would consider taking steps to ensure there is no contact with the victim by varying shift patterns or temporarily moving of roles	 58.93%	33





When we asked police forces about their approach to risk management, we were told that risk management meetings take place where an action plan is agreed. These often involve multi-disciplinary team meetings attended by the PSD, welfare support, staff association and union representatives, and domestic abuse champions. Domestic abuse champions focus on the welfare of the victim-survivor and the suspect, and identify any associated risks.

Other respondents told us that suspension or restricted duties are considered in every case, including having no contact with members of the public or domestic abuse matters. Some forces remove access to police systems and police equipment. Many of the responses agreed that risk management needs to be carefully considered on an individual basis.

When considering the management of risk, the IOPC expects every case to be considered on its own merit, as the level of risk identified in one case of PPDA will be different to the next. A considered and tailored approach should be adopted in each case, using the full range of tools available to the police. The PSD should also consider the unique risks associated with PPDA where the victim-survivor is also a person serving with the police. In cases involving police victim-survivors, there are also additional opportunities for suspects to manipulate the victim or for coercive and controlling behaviour to take place in the workplace. Police suspects may undermine a victim-survivor at work and encourage colleagues to do the same. They may encourage gossiping or use police systems to monitor and harass a victim-survivor. Police forces need to be cognisant of these additional risks and the power afforded to police suspects by virtue of their position as a police officer, and must ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

Vetting

We asked police forces about their policy on vetting where a report of PPDA is made.

Where a police officer/staff member is accused of PPDA, would this result in their vetting being reviewed?				
Answer choices			Response percent	Response total
1	Always		50.91%	28
2	Sometimes		32.73%	18
3	Hardly ever		0.00%	0
4	Never		3.64%	2
5	Don't Know		12.73%	7

The College of Policing’s Vetting Code of Practice states that ‘Following the conclusion of misconduct proceedings that result in a sanction other than dismissal, an individual’s vetting clearance will be reviewed. This review can result in the clearance being:

- granted
- granted with conditions
- downgraded (with or without conditions)
- declined

We have learnt of various risk management plans employed in cases where a report of PPDA is not proven, or in the unlikely event that PPDA is proven and the abuser is not dismissed. For example, these plans could include a review of vetting, a review of the suitability of their role, covert monitoring opportunities, relevant flags on personnel records, compulsory wearing of body-worn video or double-crewing (police officers working in pairs). These plans would have regular reviews scheduled at appropriate intervals.

An effective vetting regime helps to reassure the public that appropriate checks are conducted on individuals serving with the police. Vetting also identifies areas of vulnerability that could damage public confidence in the police. Vetting shouldn't be used in isolation and should form part of a wider risk management strategy. The College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on Vetting provides information on the vetting procedures and standards.

In their recent report, the CWJ called for the explicit inclusion of evidence of **misogyny, domestic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour** within the list of factors requiring particular scrutiny for the purposes of vetting. The IOPC supports that recommendation in recognition of the severity of those behaviours and the overall policing aim to root out police officers and staff perpetrating abuse. The College of Policing has informed us that it has considered the feedback received following consultation on the draft and those amendments will soon be made to the APP.

Patterns of behaviour

To manage the risks associated with PPDA, the IOPC considers the monitoring of patterns of behaviour and background history to be crucial in safeguarding current and potential future victim-survivors. The IOPC expects police forces to consider whether there is a pattern of behaviour emerging with a police suspect or whether there are other incidents within their complaints history that might be relevant. For example, other complaints or conduct matters involving misogynistic attitudes or predatory behaviour towards vulnerable people.

For more subtle forms of domestic abuse, such as coercive and controlling behaviour, singular incidents may not at first appear significant or concerning, but when considered over a period of time and as part of a pattern of behaviour, the cumulative impact of that behaviour becomes apparent. The IOPC expects police forces to build a picture of the police suspect's history to identify any patterns of behaviour that might not be obvious when assessing an incident or complaint in isolation.

We asked police forces how often, if at all, they check a police suspect's history and consider whether any patterns of behaviour are relevant, including previous complaints or reports of a similar nature. Ninety-six percent of respondents (55 out of 57) answered that they would **always** check history and consider patterns of










behaviour. One respondent said this sometimes would happen depending on the circumstances of the case and one respondent said this rarely happened.

! Call to action

- Heads of PSDs should critically analyse whether all appropriate steps are taken in every case to manage any real or perceived risks where a police officer or member of staff is accused of PPDA.
- Heads of PSDs should assess what steps have been taken to ensure that the College of Policing Vetting APP is followed. Where it is not routinely followed, clear plans should be put in place to change that.

Training and development

We wanted to understand what training and learning interventions staff within PSD receive to enable them to fully understand PPDA, to support victim-survivors and to investigate reports with knowledge and expertise. The below table shows the different learning interventions that are applied.

Which, if any, of the following learning interventions do PSD staff receive on PPDA? Please select all that apply.				
Answer choices			Response percent	Response total
1	Specialist training delivered in-house in relation to investigating domestic abuse		47%	27
2	Inputs from other internal departments such as guidance from the public protection unit		51%	29
3	Domestic Abuse Matters training		65%	37
4	External domestic abuse training		39%	22
5	Training on avoiding victim blaming language		47%	27
6	Training on victim vulnerability and safeguarding		53%	30
7	E-learning packages provided by the College of Policing or similar		67%	38
8	No specialist training above the standard investigatory training for PSD staff		16%	9
9	Other (please specify):		23%	13

It is encouraging that a range of learning interventions are being applied in PSDs to upskill PSD staff in this area. Domestic Abuse Matters training is provided by the domestic abuse charity, *Safe Lives*, and is designed to transform the police response to domestic abuse. It is widely considered the leading training for the police in domestic abuse. The programme also consists of longer-term measures designed to deliver sustainable change and improvement, such as *Domestic Abuse Matters* champions training and an immediate and six-month evaluation report. We would like to see this bespoke training programme taken up in those forces that said their PSD staff don't receive any specialist training.

“PSD investigators did PPDA training in 2023 and recently did DA Matters training. In addition we have run CPD events with our local DA support organisation, we will continue to review learning opportunities to ensure development, and hope that the PPDA scrutiny panel will ensure learning is updated and refreshed appropriately.”

In nine of the responses received (seven police forces), it is disappointing to note that they report having no specialist training in response to PPDA. As with any complaint or conduct matter, complainants and victim-survivors should expect, as a minimum, that the person assigned to the case has the relevant skills and experience to handle the matter. PPDA reports are no exception. In fact, they require a particular level of knowledge of the different forms of domestic abuse, the role of power imbalance, the impact trauma has on a victim-survivors response, and the needs and vulnerabilities of victim-survivors of domestic abuse.

The IOPC also expect PPDA complaint handlers to have a good understanding of the issues raised by the CWJ super-complaint and the recommendations made to improve the police response. The IOPC is acutely aware of resourcing constraints within police forces, but we encourage PSDs to consider the training available to complaint handlers on domestic abuse and PPDA. We also encourage PSDs to think creatively about other methods to raise awareness and share knowledge, such as advice, information and support from specialist departments and domestic abuse leads.

Our survey is focused on the police response to complaint and conduct matter handling and, therefore, the training that PSD staff receive. In their recent report, the CWJ raised concerns that frontline officers do not fully understand the more subtle forms of domestic abuse, such as coercive and controlling behaviour or financial abuse. It was also concerned that officers attending live domestic abuse incidents have minimised abuse as being ‘unpleasant’ behaviour and discouraged reporting due to a lack of evidence or prospect of conviction.

While our survey found that 65% of police forces deliver *Domestic Abuse Matters* training to PSD staff and other specialist training or knowledge sharing, we note the

importance of frontline officers having the knowledge and skills to recognise all forms of abuse, and the importance of recording all reports to build an accurate history of a person's behaviour. Police forces should seek to assess the level of knowledge around PPDA, particularly where there is no physical violence, among operational police officers and staff responding to incidents. Those with specialist knowledge, such as domestic abuse leads, should then take steps to raise awareness, where necessary.

Avoiding victim blaming language

Just under half of the respondents we surveyed said they received training on avoiding victim blaming language – we would like this figure to be much higher. We know from our own research that too many women and girls do not have a good experience when reporting to the police what has happened to them. A significant contributing factor is the language used when speaking to, or about, victim-survivors of violence against women and girls. Victim blaming language, attitudes, and behaviours by their very nature put the onus and responsibility on the victim-survivor for the abuse they have endured. For victim-survivors who have experienced significant trauma, it can make their experience even worse. This can not only prevent victim-survivors from reporting their experiences and pursuing justice but can stop others from coming forward.

In the survey, we asked forces what steps, if any, they have taken to ensure that their officers and staff avoid using victim blaming language. Forty-seven respondents answered this free text question. They told us about:

- various training on domestic abuse, misogyny, and inclusivity
- communications to staff through various messages, publications and in meetings
- having a culture of challenging improper behaviour
- campaigns within the police service
- having staff with backgrounds and experience in being victim-focused and using appropriate language.
- programmes of work to educate and train relevant staff, which include avoiding victim blaming language
- dip sampling of cases and reviews from independent scrutiny panels
- Operation Soteria and the National Operating Model – promoting moving from a victim blaming lens to a victim-centred, suspect-focused mindset
- promotion of and reference to the IOPC guidance

The list of activities undertaken to avoid using victim blaming language is encouraging and shows a desire to move to a victim-focused culture. [The IOPC has produced guidance](#) for IOPC staff and complaint handlers to help them think critically about their own and others people's language, attitudes and behaviours. We

encourage all police forces to read and share the guidance – including with relevant teams such as communications colleagues.

“Currently [force name] PSD Staff have the same level of DA training that investigators in CID / PPU and Specialist DA teams currently have”.

Providing training to police officers and staff on domestic abuse should be considered the start of the journey. Training should not be a single event that is deemed to sufficiently train staff through one activity. Police officers and staff should have different learning activities, with refresher training at regular intervals to keep knowledge and awareness up to date. We asked forces if they deliver continuous professional development to PSD staff to ensure that domestic abuse knowledge and training is kept up to date. Only forty-nine percent (28) of the respondents answered ‘Yes’. This is disappointing.

It is important that training for police officers and staff is in line with legislative changes, updated guidance and new research. This is also crucial where there is a turnover of staff, as knowledge and skills could be lost within PSDs.

When asked how continuous professional development (CPD) is delivered, eight of the 26 respondents referred to CPD days / events either annually or throughout the year. Respondents also spoke about internal and external training, informal inputs from other specialist departments, domestic abuse champions sharing information and guidance, disseminating learning from cases, and sharing IOPC guidance.

“I believe it would be a benefit to have wider training within the organisation on recognising DA in your colleagues, both in the sense of victims and perpetrators.

It would also be useful to stress to the wider organisation that just because you may know about safeguarding and DA, doesn't mean you wouldn't need support if you are a victim”.



Call to action

- Heads of PSDs should review the current training and development provision available for PSD staff on domestic abuse, and consider whether it is sufficient and up-to-date.
- Heads of PSDs should satisfy themselves that they have the necessary knowledge and expertise in their teams to respond effectively to reports of PPDA.
- Police forces should consider whether domestic abuse training and development reaches frontline officers in a way that equips them to understand the different forms of domestic abuse and why reporting is essential to capture patterns of behaviour.

Next steps

Violence against women and girls, including PPDA, remains a national concern and there is still work to be done to improve the police response. Through this survey and the professional discussions held with police PSDs, it is apparent that there is evidence of change and improvement. However, through our wider engagement work with our stakeholders, we are hearing that victim-survivors continue to describe poor experiences when reporting their abuse to the police, despite a number of new initiatives and measures by the police.

We will continue our work with police forces to build trust and confidence in the system so that when a report of violence against women and girls is made, victim-survivors feel heard and supported.

To support police forces in their response to violence against women and girls (including PPDA), we will publish two new guidance documents listed below. These documents will capture the learning, information and insights we identified from our focused work.

- **Learning the lessons** – we will publish a violence against women and girls issue of our magazine, which shares learning from our investigations and reviews into complaint and conduct matters. Learning the Lessons is aimed at frontline officers and staff, and those working in policy, learning or management roles in policing.
- **Focus** – we will publish a special violence against women and girls' edition of our Focus guidance, aimed at complaints handlers. Focus gives PSDs

practical guidance and examples on dealing with complaint and conduct matters and aims to improve standards.

We aim to publish both documents in Spring 2025.

As part of our regular engagement programme with police forces, we will continue the conversations on violence against women and girls and hold police forces to account. We will continue to share learning and insights to support forces to make improvements to complaints handling. Examples of shareable practice will be published in our oversight monthly newsletter to help police forces improve their processes and support positive practice.

As noted earlier in the report, as part of our transformation programme, we have started work to explore opportunities for increasing independence at various stages of the complaints and misconduct process. This work will look at our operational processes and decision making, building the expertise and capability of IOPC staff, independent scrutiny of police force investigations, and communication with victim-survivors. We expect to be able to share more about this work in Spring 2025.

Glossary

Appropriate authority

The appropriate authority is the chief officer with direction and control over the police employee. For most forces, this is the chief constable. Where the chief officer is subject of a complaint or conduct matter, the appropriate authority is the local policing body (the police and crime commissioner or equivalent).

Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights

Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides that no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It is an absolute right – which means that torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment is never permissible, in any circumstances.

Authorised Professional Practice (APP)

Professional practice on policing, which is developed and approved by the College of Policing. Police officers and staff are expected to follow the APP when doing their job.

Balance of probabilities

A standard of proof used in civil law cases, which means more likely than not.

Centurion national factor

A 'tag' applied to complaint and conduct matters in the police case management system to provide information about the type or circumstances of the complaint or conduct matter.

Conduct matter

Any matter which isn't and hasn't been the subject of a complaint. There needs to be an indication that the person serving in the police may have committed a criminal offence or behaved in a way that would justify police disciplinary proceedings.

Disciplinary proceedings

Disciplinary proceedings means either a police misconduct meeting or a misconduct hearing.

Independent domestic violence adviser (IDVA)

A trained specialist who provides a service to victim-survivors of domestic abuse at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners, or family members, with the aim of securing their, and their children's, safety.

Independent sexual violence adviser (ISVA)

A trained specialist who provides a service to victim-survivors who have experienced rape and / or sexual assault. The type of support varies depending on the needs of the individual and their circumstances.

Mandatory referral criteria

Complaints and recordable conduct matters that must be referred to the IOPC. See IOPC statutory guidance for more information.

Operation Soteria

Operation Soteria is a programme that brings together police forces and prosecutors with academics, to use evidence and insight to change the way rape and sexual offences are dealt with. It aims to increase the number of adult rape and serious sexual assault cases that reach a criminal charge, and also deliver sustained improvement in the response of the criminal justice system as a whole. This has led to the development of the first National Operating Model for the investigation of rape and serious sexual offences.

Police complaint

Any expression of dissatisfaction with a police force that is expressed by or on behalf of a member of the public.

Person serving with the police

Police officer (of any rank), special constable (volunteer police officers), police community support officers (PCSOs), police staff, and people contracted to work for the police.

Police victim

Victim-survivors who are also serving with the police.

Professional standards department (PSD)

A police department that deals with complaints against its officers and staff, and misconduct allegations made by members of the public.

Professionalising investigations programme (PIP)

A development programme to give investigators the skills to conduct professional investigations. It provides training, workplace assessment and examinations to accredit investigators to a national standard. There are four levels:

- PIP 1 (priority and volume crime investigations)
- PIP 2 (serious and complex investigations)
- PIP 3 (major investigations) and
- PIP 4 (strategic management of highly complex investigations)

Victim blaming

The transfer of blame from the perpetrator to the victim-survivor who is held entirely or partially to blame for the harm they suffered.

Victim-survivor

Although 'victim' is a legal definition within the criminal justice system, 'survivor' can be used as a term of empowerment to convey that a person has started the healing process and may have gained a sense of peace in their life. Some people identify as a victim, while others prefer the term survivor. Throughout this report, we use the term 'victim-survivor'.

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in an alternative format, you can contact us in a number of ways:

Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC)
10 South Colonnade Canary Wharf London E14 4PU
Tel: **0300 020 0096**
Email: enquiries@policeconduct.gov.uk
Website: www.policeconduct.gov.uk
Text relay: **18001 020 8104 1220**

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