

# PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

<b>Force</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Police and Crime Commissioner</b>	Ben Adams
<b>Chief Constable</b>	Emma Barnett
<b>Title of inspection</b>	<a href="#">Review of policing domestic abuse during the pandemic 2021</a>
<b>Inspectorate</b>	 <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire &amp; Rescue Services</p>
<b>Summary of inspection</b>	<p>The United Kingdom entered the first national lockdown on 23 March 2020. Most of us were instructed to stay at home. This meant many victims of domestic abuse couldn't distance themselves from their abuser, safely contact the police for help or get support from family and friends. Forces started to work differently, recognising that the absence of a call to the police doesn't imply absence of abuse and harm. Many forces adopted innovative new practices to check on the safety of victims of domestic abuse, finding new ways to 'reach in' to them rather than waiting for victims to 'reach out'.</p>
<b>Grade</b>	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>We have also made three recommendations aimed at ensuring forces continue to respond to the challenges of policing domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We recommend that if forces continue to adopt online contact methods in respect of victims of domestic abuse, they should immediately introduce an effective supervision and monitoring framework. The framework should assess the suitability of such contact methods, ensuring that victim needs are at the forefront of decisions around their use and appropriate onward action is taken in all cases.</li> <li>• We recommend that forces immediately review their use of a telephone-based initial response to any domestic abuse incidents and crimes and ensure that it is in accordance with the strict parameters set out by the College of Policing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p>We recommend that forces immediately review their capacity to provide ongoing support and safeguarding to victims of domestic abuse whose case is awaiting trial at court. This should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure there are sufficient resources available to maintain contact with victims to keep them up to date with the progress of their case; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enable the offer of access to specialist support services as well as opportunities to address concerns victims may have regarding continuing to support a prosecution through the delays.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p>We recommend that all forces immediately review their use of outcome 15, outcome 16 and evidence-led prosecutions. This is to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• domestic abuse investigations guarantee all attempts to engage victims are explored, and that all possible lines of evidence are considered so that in all cases the best possible outcomes for victims are achieved;</li> <li>• there is regular and effective supervision of investigations that supports the above point to be achieved; and</li> <li>• the use of outcomes 15 and 16 is appropriate, and the reasons for using them, including auditable evidence of victim engagement, are clearly recorded.</li> </ul>
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**Areas for improvement**

### Police Crime and Commissioner’s Acknowledgement

The Staffordshire Commissioner’s Office welcomes the review of policing Domestic Abuse (DA) during the pandemic and the recommendations made therefrom. This ensures those affected by DA across our geography continue to receive consistent services that best meet their needs, thus helping them to live safe, fulfilling and independent lives. Staffordshire has strong, well established governance of the DA agenda, with a multi-agency pan area strategy and action plan overseen by the Staffordshire Commissioner’s Office.

### Chief Constable’s response

Recommendation One:

The force High Risk Dashboard on digital 101 is now live, and working effectively picking up incidents of high risk including domestics and stalking, a digital operative is assigned to this dashboard 24/7 to check on incoming high risk demand, enable triage and urgent action if required.

The force has a clear red line policy and which is applied to domestic abuse that are serviced from within the resolution centre.

The College of Policing have evaluated Staffordshire Police’s current resolution structure and policies and have assessed it to have clear processes and policies to manage risk of a low level.

The force managed risk during the pandemic by visiting or contacting high risk repeat victims through partners or Harm Reduction Hubs.

Recommendation Two:

Staffordshire Police currently utilises an omni competence model within their geographical prosecution hubs. This ensures flex within capacity and capabilities to support victims and witnesses based on specific demand. Through the criminal justice Crime Management monthly meeting, victim and witness attrition is governed by identifying any themes or concerns through performance monitoring. Once established through training and the support of respective senior leadership teams, this themes and concerns can be understood and addressed. In recognition of COVID demand from court backlogs, we have identified a need to invest in this area, seeking external funding, also supported by Op Jafar (the force Op Talla). These funding streams have allowed us to increase capacity by six colleagues on a temporary basis. This will support the prosecution hubs to ensure

victims and witnesses remain supported and informed as we work through the challenges of the court backlog. It is recognised nationally by HCMTS that the Midlands region (Staffordshire) has significant challenges, they have assured they are ensuring priority national focus.

The new victim's code and witness bill proposes that special measures automatically will be offered to DA victims. Often DA victims are the most vulnerable and have significant fear when presenting evidence, especially in controlling and cohesive offences. It takes tremendous courage to present evidence under these circumstances, the judicial process should recognise this and provide reasonable adjustments under special measures to alleviate the concerns and stress felt within the victim. Staffordshire hosts a Vulnerable Victims unit within Criminal Justice, a paper has been submitted to enhance the department with a Vulnerable Justice Supervisor (VJS) responsible for linking in with 3rd sector and partner agencies to support vulnerable victims and develop special measure process. This appointment has been agreed and a colleague appointed in the role.

#### Recommendation Three:

The force has clear referral pathways for crime domestics to Victims Gateway and New Era to build victim resilience.

The Harm Reduction Hubs utilise the BRAIN performance Dashboard to identify repeat victims of harm. They will also receive notifications from MASH for referral to early Help services or the MASH will make statutory referral to Children's or Adults Social Care.

The force is currently reviewing its supervisory review processes as this was highlighted as a gap in the current HMICFRS CP Inspection. Sgt do complete reviews of the outcomes but the application of the relevant outcome is not accurate at this time. The force is developing practice to make the required changes to the system for crime validation and outcome.

Work is ongoing not just for DA but for volume crime for the use of outcome 15/16.

CPS have provided a briefing document for evidence led prosecutions and engaged in an internal "Grapevine" Live event.

Evidence led prosecution will be revisited as part of the force DA training programme in the new year 2022.

### **Police Crime and Commissioner's overall comments**

Staffordshire has strong, well established governance of the DA agenda, with a multi-agency pan area strategy and action plan overseen by the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office. DA remains a priority for the public, the Commissioner, the force and partners who are all wholly committed to keep momentum in ongoing actions and progress already made in this area.