

POLICE PERPETRATED DOMESTIC ABUSE IN ENGLAND AND WALES. A LITERATURE REVIEW

This review covers prevalence; reasons for prevalence; unique victim-survivor barriers to seeking help and international solutions to Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse (PPDA).

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Introduction

I was asked to provide a review of literature by the Centre for Women's Justice in 2020 to support one of their super-complaints tackling police perpetrated domestic abuse. This review is clearly not the last word in joining the dots for gaps and flaws in policing but is a good start in terms of identifying and rectifying the low-hanging fruit within policing that contribute to a culture where violence against women and girls remains systematically under-prioritised.

When we talk about domestic abuse we are talking about the systemic degradation, humiliation, coercion and financial deprivation of thousands of predominantly women and girls, overwhelmingly by men and boys (Walby & Allen, 2004; Walby & Towers, 2017; ONS, 2019; Hester 2013). The psychological distress of women traumatised and terrorised by the intimate betrayal of men they love is well-documented (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Myhill, 2017), as are the numbers affected, with the ONS (2019) reporting 2.4 million victims of domestic abuse from the age of 16 to 74 years old, two thirds of them women and girls. Women's Aid (2020) adds context to the numbers: 'Women experience higher rates of repeated victimisation and are much more likely to be seriously hurt or killed... women are more likely to experience higher levels of fear and are more likely to be subjected to coercive and controlling behaviours.'

Thanks to consistent campaigning by women's organisations over many years (Sutton, 1978; Hague & Malos, 1998), police and criminal justice agencies' responses to and understanding of domestic abuse have improved. With the implementation of mandatory training (College of Policing, 2016), independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs) and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) there is now a more systematic approach and although this still requires attention, there have been steps in the right direction (HMIC, 2014). However, British policing has only recently turned its attention towards tackling abusers within its own ranks, publishing a national strategy and code of ethics to prevent officers and staff abusing their position for sexual purposes with members of the public (NPCC, 2017). Despite recognising 'victims of domestic abuse' (ibid: p4) to be a particular target for further abuse and exploitation by corrupt officers and staff, the issue of police officers who perpetrate domestic abuse against intimate partners, family members or fellow police officers and staff is conspicuously absent from the strategy, ethics or inspections.

This literature review is a summary of research evidence of four main areas of police perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA); prevalence; reasons for prevalence; unique victim-survivor barriers to seeking help and international solutions to PPDA.

Definitions

UK Government definition of domestic abuse (Gov.uk, 2012): "Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling³, coercive⁴, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. It can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional"

According to the ONS report 'Domestic Abuse Prevalence and Trends' (2019) controlling behaviour is defined as: 'a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.'

As part of the same report, coercive behaviour is defined as: 'an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.'

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC, 2017: p6) defines abuse of position for a sexual purpose as:

"Any behaviour by a police officer or police staff member, whether on or off duty, that takes advantage of their position as a member of the police service to misuse their position, authority or powers in order to pursue a sexual or improper emotional relationship with any member of the public." For our purposes and in the absence of a clear definition for PPDA, we are taking 'any member of the public' as a partner, current or ex, who may or may not be a police officer themselves or a child of an abusing police officer, staff member or police volunteer.

Prevalence of Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse

Despite the fact that 'Police leaders continue to prioritise tackling domestic abuse' (HMICFRS, 2019c: p4), prevalence and reporting rates on the number of police officers who commit domestic abuse against their partner remain unclear.

Rates of self-reported PPDA by serving officers range from 4.8% (Klein & Klein, 2000) to more than 40% (Johnson, 1991). A systematic review of PPDA prevalence studies published before April 2015 found that of the seven that were based on self-reporting, significant discrepancies in prevalence rates could be due to differing methodological rigor with regard to measurement and sampling (Mennicke and Ropes, 2016). In order to accommodate the variance in rates, the authors of the review established a 'pooled rate of 21.2%' (ibid) or 'approximately twice the rate of domestic violence in the general public' (ibid: p4).

Women are under-represented in policing; making up 30% (37,500) of all police officers in England and Wales, with the majority police constables, seen as the lowest level of the hierarchy. Of other roles, such as PCSO, police staff, designated officers and volunteers, women make up 62% (48,888) of the workforce (Home Office, 2019).

With 70% or 86,220 of serving police officers being male (Home Office, 2019), the numbers of possible domestic abusers within the ranks of policing is staggering. At the 'pooled [prevalence] rate of 21.2%', a total of 18,278 current male police officers may be an abuser, even using the lowest possible rate of 4.8% indicates a possible 4,138 of serving police officers are committing these crimes. With 624 investigations for PPDA last year (CWJ, 2019) this lowest rate of perpetration represents a reporting rate of 15% and a conviction rate at only 'two thirds of that for the general population' (ibid: p28).

In the last three years to 31 March 2019, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has reported that they have received 415 referrals relating to abuse of position for a sexual purpose (HMICFRS, 2019b). A Centre for Women's Justice super complaint identified 624 domestic abuse related misconduct investigations 'where the accused is a police officer, PCSO or civilian staff' (CWJ, 2019) with only 47 cases referred to the IOPC. In 88 cases, where some action was taken against a

suspect, the majority were given 'management advice' and only 24 were dismissed from the police force (ibid: p28). Sexual crimes are generally understood to be under-reported (ONS, 2019) and crimes against the police even more so due to the imbalance of power between officers or staff and the public, with any additional vulnerabilities of victims an aggravating factor (NPCC, 2017). As the HMICFRS (2019b) bluntly acknowledges: 'most cases go unreported' (p8).

As part of the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) 2008 guidance on investigating domestic abuse, there is a small section covering 'Police Officers who commit domestic abuse-related criminal offences' (p99), with references to two relevant policies: 'ACPO (2004) Policy on Police Officers who Commit Domestic Violence-Related Criminal Offences' (ibid: p99) and 'ACPO (2007) Police Officers and Police Staff that are Victims of Domestic Abuse' (ibid: p100). Despite searches, it has not been possible to locate these policies, any further reference to them. Guidance now exists in the form of a few paragraphs in the personal management section of the College of Policing (2020b) authorised professional practice on domestic abuse.

As a result of the HMIC in 2016 highlighting a lack of 'comprehensive national policing response' (HMIC cited in NPCC, 2017: p4) the National Police Chiefs Council issued a strategy to 'address police officers and staff who abuse their position for a sexual purpose'. However, in spite of the strategy's declaration of a 'primary duty of care to potential victims' and a commitment to 'vigorously pursue perpetrators' (NPCC, 2017: p2) there is no mention of looking beyond the issue of police perpetrated predation of the public, in particular victims of domestic abuse, to include those officers who are themselves domestic abusers.

HMICFRS inspectors scrutinise and update on police responses to domestic abuse where victims-survivors are members of the public (HMICFRS, 2019c) and abuse of position for a sexual purpose, where police officers target those victims to sexually abuse them (HMICFRS, 2019b). However they do not scrutinise police responses to officers or staff who are also perpetrators of domestic abuse where victims may be partners or colleagues. This represents a gap in monitoring and scrutiny that risks profound ethical implications for all police forces (HMICFRS, 2019a: p8).

Reasons for rates of Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse

It could be argued that a desire to avoid eroding public trust and confidence in the police service forms part of the reluctance to tackle the thorny but pressing problem of PPDA. This may indeed be the case, however there are also other, more practical issues that need to be urgently addressed.

Unethical attitudes go unchallenged

Since the NPCC strategy on 'abuse of position for a sexual purpose' was published in 2017, efforts were made within forces to raise awareness of 'why it is inappropriate to form sexual relationships with vulnerable people they have met through their work' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p11). In spite of these efforts, the most recent HMICFRS (2019b) inspection found police forces where staff were 'confused' (p 15) about what constituted abuse of power for a sexual purpose, 'had limited information about the abuse of position for a sexual purpose' (p15), 'had no knowledge or understanding of this type of behaviour' or 'the force stance on it' (p15).

The inspections form part of a series on 'Abuse of position for sexual purpose' started in 2015 after concerns were raised about how police forces were tackling 'predators... in policing' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p3). However the most recent report notes that even staff working in 'specialist sexual offences investigation teams and others working in detective supervisory posts' (ibid: p15) showed poor knowledge and understanding. They conclude with some frustration: 'For almost a decade, the exploitation of vulnerable people for sex by police officers and staff has been identified by the NCA

as one of the biggest corruption threats to UK policing. It is unacceptable that staff in some forces don't have an awareness of this type of corruption' (ibid: p15). This, in itself, raises issues with staff and officer recruitment processes as well as widespread unethical attitudes which contribute to the potential for PPDA.

Ethical considerations are reinforced in widely varying ways with inconsistent results. Some forces have ethical committees, some reinforce ethical standards through a yearly health check, some do both, some neither. In half of the 36 forces with ethical committees, staff did not know how to refer into the panels or where to find the outcome of committee discussions (HMICFRS, 2019b). A tokenistic attitude to ethics is a risk to the professionalism of the police as a whole but will particularly embolden insider corruption and discourage reporting.

Unsafe workplace culture

In 2016, UNISON carried out sexual harassment research amongst their police staff members, revealing high levels of disturbing harassment including significant levels of serious sexual offences. Of police staff working alongside officers and the public, 70% had witnessed sexual harassment and 60% had personally experienced it. Incidents ranged from 49% witnessing the repeated telling of sexualised 'jokes' to 4% (or 1 in 25) of staff being 'pressurised into having sex with a colleague' (UNISON, 2016: p2). The more serious the misconduct, the less likely police staff were to challenge it due to; no confidence in HR (45%), no confidence in senior management (35%) and no confidence in the force professional standards department (20%) (UNISON, 2016: p3). These concerns were echoed in the most recent inspection (HMICFRS, 2019b) where they found: 'some staff wanted to stay anonymous and didn't want to raise their concerns with their supervisor. Others were concerned about the culture the supervisor had created which didn't encourage them to report their concerns. We found some cases where it was the behaviour of the supervisor that was the cause of staff concerns' (ibid: p23). The evidence bears out existing research indicating where there are more men in a workforce, there is more likelihood of serious forms of sexualised harassment (Street et al, 2007). Counter corruption units (CCU) are encouraged to build independent links with victim-survivor organisations to support survivors who may wish to come forward about police corruption or abuse, however only two forces in England and Wales have CCU's have so far fully engaged with local agencies (HMICFRS, 2019b: p25).

Domestic abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence against women have a profound impact on workplaces. Key impacts of this violence include "higher rates of absenteeism, loss of productivity, reduced employee morale and increased need for support in the workplace for victims" (Wells et al, cited in Holmes & Flood, 2013: p10).

Police staff reported that the workplace environment raised their levels of stress and reduced their productivity (UNISON, 2016). The gendered impact of these environments is borne out by the numbers of female officers on recuperative or adjusted/restricted duties being almost double the percentage of male officers (Home Office, 2019: p38). Although women account for only 30% of police officers in England and Wales, they are also disproportionately represented in the long-term absence rate: 'excluding maternity/paternity leave, females accounted for 44% of all absences' (Home Office, 2019: p39).

Failure to meet basic safeguarding requirements

HMICFRS inspections continue to point out that police forces display a concerning reluctance to take the necessary practical steps and implement policies to tackle predatory police officers in spite of inspections revealing that 'nearly all forces have dealt with or were dealing with cases where there has been an abuse of position for a sexual purpose' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p8).

All police forces are aware that vetting and checking those who work in every force is: 'the first line of defence against all forms of corruption' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p17). Although forces agreed national standards for vetting officers 14 years ago (HMICFRS, 2019b), the most recent inspection found 17 police forces where at least 13% of their workforce did not have current clearance to perform their roles (ibid). One police force said more than half (52%) of officers had not had a proper background check. Data was also inaccurate, including officers whose vetting had expired or who had never been vetted because they joined before 2006, when national standards were agreed. With the most common length of service being between 15 and 20 years, accounting for 23% of all current police officers, this is of particular concern (Home Office, 2019: p20). Worryingly, there is also no requirement to vet officers who transfer between forces, in spite of evidence that: 'some are later subject to serious allegations, including sexually abusing vulnerable people' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p19).

The inspection also showed forces lack understanding of who needed vetting or re-vetting and to what level. The current status of officer and staff vetting and a deviation from the national guidelines has left hundreds of police officers and staff unchecked (HMICFRS, 2019b).

The Policing and Crime Act (2017) required all forces in England and Wales to inform the College of Policing of misconduct dismissals and as part of its 'commitment to transparency' the College of Policing (2020a) publish a publicly searchable 'Police Barred List'. However, it is not clear whether information on barred officers and staff is also included on the governments 'Disclosure and Barred' service (GOV.UK, 2020) which is more commonly used by employers in partner agencies outside of the police force such as health or social care.

There is clear evidence that police forces do not meet even their minimum obligation to ensure that police colleagues, their families, communities or the public are safeguarded from police perpetrators of abuse and sexual offences. This represents a calculated prioritisation of limited resources which assumes a toleration of 'the endemic nature of police corruption' (Home Office, 2011: p11) to an irresponsible level. Vetting and checking represents the most basic mechanism to exclude the minority of offenders already known or convicted and while important, the institution responsible for enforcing the law should surely take a wider focus on organisational safety and the opportunities for unmonitored contact with partners and ex-partners as well as members of the public. With plans to recruit an additional 20,000 police staff over the next 3 years, it is crucial that all forces address these serious gaps in their safeguarding processes.

Confusing terminology

Unfortunately the issues do not end here; 25 of 43 police force counter corruption units are not using nationally agreed corruption categories or are categorising corruption incorrectly (HMICFRS, 2019b) with 'many examples' (p21) of sexual misconduct being categorised as 'abuse of authority' which has no sexual reference. Interestingly, sexual misconduct while off duty does not constitute 'corruption' but falls into 'crime' (p21). This means that if an officer commits for instance, domestic abuse off duty while at home, they would immediately be treated as a member of the public while at the same time, being a member of the police force.

Another important finding from the inspection is how the terminology of police abuse in all its forms is unclear and could be seen as conveniently euphemistic or misleading and which may also account for some of the issues internally where guidance and categorisations are causing confusion. The police websites and internal documents prefer to reference 'misconduct', 'professional behaviour', 'integrity', 'legitimacy' rather than 'domestic abuse', 'rape', 'sexual abuse', 'complaints' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p34). Research evidence also points to initial categorisations of reported PPDA by fellow

officers as benefitting from colleagues' use of preferential discretion in how cases of serious sexual offences are recorded (Stinson & Liederbach, 2012).

If the police do have a 'fulsome commitment' (NPCC, 2017: p3) to encouraging the reporting of misconduct and putting victims 'at the heart of any investigation' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p32) then naming and terminology needs to be reviewed within the nationally stated aim of making it 'straightforward and transparent' (NPCC, 2017: p10) for both the public and the police themselves.

IT systems & phones open to misuse

ICT systems holding personal data on members of the public, as well as operational information should only be using for 'legitimate policing purposes' (HMICFRS, 2019b: p25). However, despite recommendations in 2016 (HMICFRS, 2019b) and in 2011 (Home Office), 31 police forces still cannot monitor the details of who accesses what information and most, if not all, are unable to monitor the use of systems accessed remotely. Unfettered access to information such as unlisted phone numbers, license plates, addresses, location of refuges and any other sensitive and personal communication relating to a victim-survivor of domestic abuse gives a police abuser the power to terrorise with privilege and impunity. This is of particular concern in these times of COVID-19 when working from home has become the norm for many police officers and staff, accompanied by a disturbing increase in levels of domestic abuse (Townsend, 2020).

Complainants of rape and sexual offences are routinely subjected to demands by the police for full access to their mobile phones and digital devices when they report their experiences. If a victim of rape chooses not to provide the police with blanket consent to their digital lives, they run the risk that their case will be dropped (Big Brother Watch, 2019). In stark contrast to what has been termed 'digitally strip searching victims' of rape and serious sexual assault (Bowcott & Barr, 2020) many police forces cannot or do not examine data about how their staff use force phones and systems. Some forces believe the law prohibits such scrutiny despite other forces successfully using such information to prosecute police offenders while others have implemented an overly bureaucratic monitoring process, thereby reducing their effectiveness (HMICFRS, 2019b: p25). Police forces that allow unmitigated risks that such sensitive information may be misused in the face of such inconsistent understanding of their data management obligations are arguably working illegally but are also and without doubt, creating a conducive context for abuse and abusers within their ranks. As one police analyst airily remarked: "We run a very open intelligence system... which probably lends itself to abuse" (Home Office, 2011: p30).

Reactive not proactive

Given this landscape, it is not surprising that the HMICFRS (2019b) found that 31 of 32 forces inspected were entirely reactive to corruption rather than proactive. This literature review reflects a startling lack of professional curiosity or interest in the face of clear evidence that not only are there abusers within the police force but that the environment and operational culture leave it open to abuse from 'insider threat' (HMICFRS, 2019a: p14). Counter corruption units are expected to produce annual threat assessments to identify corrupt officers and individual and organisational threats, amongst others. More than half of police forces (26) did not have a current threat assessment meaning neither they, nor the National Crime Agency (NCA) who analyse national threat assessments annually, are working with accurate, standardised or complete information (HMICFRS, 2019b: p22).

Situational strategies that prevent crime by regulating access to victims are an important part of a systemic preventative approach. For instance, considerable efforts internationally and nationally to tackle online abusers in the general public have been made by organisations such as the Internet

Watch Foundation, NCA and CEOP (IICSA, n.d.), it is now time they turned their attention to abuses within their own ranks. Fundamental flaws in vetting, digital monitoring, workplace culture and professional ethics, facilitate domestic abusers within the police force to a systemic level. As one perpetrator of rape put it, he joined the police 'to gain the keys to the sweetshop' (BBC News, 2020).

Problems faced by victims of Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse

Unequal power

The police perform a key role in the prevention and prosecution of domestic abuse and cases where police officers or staff are themselves the perpetrators of abuse have the 'clear potential' to: 'erode public confidence and trust in the service' (NPCC, 2017: p2). Whether consciously or not, there is an element of defensiveness in reactions by institutions to claims of abuse by insiders constituting a form of 'institutional narcissism' (Gardner, 2012). Research suggests that police forces do take allegations of PPDA very seriously but from the perspective of liability, reputation and career damage (Wetendorf, 2014). Perpetrators of abuse benefit from an element of transference of the reputation ascribed to the institution they represent, this coupled with a societal reluctance to believe that domestic abuse could occur within trusted institutions (Bloom, 1993) works both to reduce suspicion of the perpetrator and to gain the compliance and subsequent silence of victims. Predatory men seek out such blind spots, as many recent high profile investigations have shown (Smith, 2016; IICSA, n.d.), where our moral construction of trusted institutions and an organisational culture of access, power and impunity combine to allow abuse to flourish. Even a fictitious representation of police corruption in 'Emmerdale' is enough to provoke societal pro-police bias, with Ofcom receiving a number of complaints in relation to 'how the storyline involving police corruption was misrepresentative' (Lindsay, 2020). Those that do report PPDA under such prejudicial conditions risk being stigmatised, not only for challenging the status quo in their own family but also for challenging 'the police family' (Wetendorf, 2000).

Diane Wetendorf's (2000) work on PPDA describes how police officers are trained to use their body and voice to intimidate, establishing authority and corresponding victim compliance as well as how to 'justifiably' escalate and de-escalate the use of force. Their professional skills combined with access to personal and sensitive victim information contained in police systems that is unlikely to be monitored, particularly while remote working (HMICFRS, 2019b) and access to police equipment, knowledge of the law and the mobility of the job coalesce into an 'arsenal of skills and tactics not commonly possessed by civilians' (Wetendorf, 2000: p375). Thus, victims of PPDA are also the victims of a unique set of vulnerabilities from 'the most dangerous abusers' (Wetendorf, 2000: p377) which require similarly unique strategies to address.

Investigation process

A Home Office (2011) review of police corruption identified very clearly that one of the major issues with the current investigation process is: 'the difficulty of using standard criminal investigative techniques against police officers' (p36). The review pointed to officers' understanding of the methods of detection putting them in a good position to 'cover their tracks', it also confirms that confidentiality within a force is significantly at risk of compromise, particularly in smaller forces and where accused officers exploit disclosure rules to require the prosecution to share a wide range of information on the complainant.

Professional Standards investigators stated that it is 'definitely harder getting a conviction of a police officer' (ibid: p36) particularly where investigations are perceived as unfairly targeting certain officers. The review recommends that investigations and management should use care with regard

to the impact or demoralisation of police colleagues, indicating that the treatment of the police using standard criminal procedure may be necessarily subject to distortion.

The Home Office (2011), in attempting a pragmatic solution to the intractable problem of obtaining convictions against police officers, advise 'police discipline procedures' as an 'alternative to conviction' (p37) or 'moving them to a role where they face [sic] less risk to the organisation or the public' (p38). This was presented as a 'strategic' approach to officers who abuse, rather than an 'enforcement' approach where the goal of an investigation is constrained by operational outcomes and the 'principles of justice' and is not justice in the sense that the public understand it and are subject to it. This may well go some way to explaining the number of cases of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences that are dealt with internally and not referred either to the IOPC or for criminal prosecution (CWJ, 2019).

Victims worse off

In a study of PPDA, Stinson & Liederbach (2012) point to overlapping characteristics between domestic abuse by a member of the public and 'police culture and everyday police work, including violence exposure, alcohol abuse and authoritarianism' (ibid: p603). When UNISON (2016) asked police staff their reasons for not challenging workplace sexual harassment they said: 'it was easier to keep quiet, nothing would be done if they did speak out, they were not confident the matter would be kept confidential and that they would not be taken seriously' (p3). In part this may be due to cultural values of loyalty where the police and their families are expected not to expose police perpetrators (Johnson et al, 2005) but victims will also be assessing the consequences of whistleblowing and whether they will be 'worse off' (WNC, 2009) by coming forward.

Analysis of the reasons why victims-survivors of domestic abuse may not report to the police shows decision-making is 'organised around incentives and costs' (Felson et al, 2002: p619) i.e. victims are more inclined to report when the incentives are high and the costs are low. The Centre for Women's Justice (2019) reveals outcomes for women who report domestic abuse against a police officer are not encouraging; in over 75% of cases there was a finding of 'no case to answer or no sanction' (CWJ, 2019: p4). It is therefore significant that where the perpetrator is a member of the public, the research evidence points to the seriousness of the offence being a key reason for calling the police (Felson et al, 2002), whereas in the UNISON (2016) study of sexual harassment of police staff, the more serious the offence, the less likely police staff were to challenge it. A Home Office (2011) review of police corruption confirms: 'a cultural resistance to tell on your own' (p32).

Victims of PPDA will consider their own and their family's safety within their decision to report. It is well understood that victims of domestic abuse are at greatest risk for homicide when they attempt to leave a violent relationship (Campbell et al., 2003) and research suggests this risk may be heightened for victims of PPDA (Mennicke and Ropes, 2016).

Police culture

A Home Office (2011) review of police corruption described its origins arising 'in a systematic and predictable way from the nature and context of policing' (p28). Research with victims of PPDA confirm that aspects: 'of police culture and the job conspire to discourage exposure of these crimes and contribute to the "hidden" nature of the problem' (Stinson & Liederbach, 2012: p605). As an overwhelmingly male institution (Home Office, 2019), 'policing often clashes with the interests of women as; victims of crime; co-workers; and law-breakers' (Kraska & Kappeler, 1995, p. 87).

As such, police culture demonstrates similarities with institutions that have been identified as being particularly associated with incidents of abuse. For example, 'punitive rather than rehabilitative

cultures', 'closed' and 'macho' cultures (Klatt et al, 2016; Heaton et al, 2012). Institutions such as the police which are arranged along rigid hierarchical lines and closed to external scrutiny may be less open to external or internal challenge and have been identified as associated with instances of abuse of power (National Crime Agency, 2013; Erooga, 2009). Such an environment disempowers victims and colleagues to raise concerns and poor practice persists unchallenged (UNISON, 2016; Erooga, 2009).

Manipulation of police processes

Analysis of data available on police officers arrested for domestic abuse related crimes reveals officers escaping appropriate penalties due to favourable and discretionary decisions by colleagues as a 'professional courtesy' (Stinson & Liederbach, 2012). The same research also points to a minority (32%) of officers convicted of 'misdemeanour domestic assault' losing their jobs as police officers (ibid: p618). With vetting and background checking of officers and staff across police forces in England and Wales currently in disarray (HMICFRS, 2019b), the risk that an unknown number of current serving officers and staff are also alleged, charged or convicted domestic abusers is deeply troubling.

Failures in investigation

A Home Office (2011) summary of police corruption states 'achieving convictions of police officers appeared particularly difficult' (p5) citing 'demoralisation of forces', 'bad publicity' and internal 'hostility' to investigations as the major obstacles (p5). It also points to 'a significant amount of inappropriate use of police databases' for 'personal interest purposes' (ibid: p23), which was assessed internally as a 'low level' breach of professional standards. Such leaking of information for their own benefit or for those in their social network was by far the most common type of corruption and one which the police were aware had 'adverse implications for the police and public' (Home Office, 2011: p27).

Research evidence shows that one in five officers arrested for domestic abuse had also been a defendant in other civil or criminal cases (Stinson & Liederbach, 2012) confirming that domestic abuse is part of a pattern of poor attitudes and behaviour, possibly over many years. Research points to best practice systems with regard to police accountability, which identify patterns or indicators of misconduct across a series of categories (Walker, 2005). However the lack of proactive investigation across police forces in England and Wales (HMICFRS, 2019b) suggests that early identification of misconduct is unlikely and that investigations into PPDA may not routinely explore the association between indicative police misconduct and domestic abuse.

Police officer victim of domestic abuse

Where two police officers are in a domestically abusive relationship the victim issues are compounded. Research with female victims (Wetendorf, 2000) who are also police officers shows they risk their careers as well as their family life, that her competence as a police officer may well be brought into question, that she too, will be stigmatised by having accused a member of the police 'family' and that she may well be the person who is disciplined or forced to leave her job.

Wetendorf's (2000) work also shows that conflicts or cooperation between police departments can lead to a breach of the victim's confidentiality and the effectiveness of investigations is hampered by conflicts of interest and competing loyalties. With 45% of police staff in England and Wales having no confidence in their HR department but one in twenty-five (4%) reporting they have been subjected to peer abuse and 'pressurised into having sex with a colleague' (UNISON, 2016: p2), it is clear that domestic and sexual abuse within police ranks is endemic and likely to remain so. The

impact of police abusers on the community is serious; bias in their conduct and attitudes will affect their ability to perform their duties, particularly in cases of violence against women.

Police Training

In 2014 an HMIC review of police responses to domestic abuse 'noted that officers appeared to lack the skills, knowledge and understanding to deal with domestic abuse effectively, and, in particular, were poorly equipped to identify abuse in the absence of overt physical violence' (College of Policing, 2016: p9). It also confirmed what many women have learned to their cost, that 'domestic abuse was not afforded a high priority relative to acquisitive crime (such as burglary)' (ibid: p9). This situation was in part attributed to a lack of effective training.

The most recent HMICFRS (2019c) update on the police response to domestic abuse mentions a response in the form of a training programme called 'Domestic Abuse Matters' intended to enhance 'skills, knowledge and effectiveness' in dealing with domestic abuse. Although the current training does not specifically target domestic abuse by police officers and staff, the inspection reports it has a 'positive impact on officers' knowledge and attitude' (HMICFRS, 2019c: p8). However the evaluation of the first responder component of the training by the College of Police (2016) reports the training had 'no effect on wider attitudes to domestic abuse' and 'negligible improvements in knowledge and understanding' (ibid: p5) although it has significantly increased levels of understanding around the newer offence of coercive and controlling behaviour.

Solutions to the problem of Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse

Although there is evidence that PPDA is a serious and systemic issue for police forces across England and Wales (Home Office, 2011; CWJ, 2019) and that there has been an attempt to provide policy guidance in the past (NPIA, 2008) this review has not found any comprehensive national acknowledgement, scrutiny or response to this crime. Current guidance is limited to a small section in the personnel management section of the Authorised Professional Practice on domestic abuse (College of Policing, 2020b). There is no mention of adopting of a PPDA policy and as the Centre for Women's Justice (2019) super complaint points out, inadequate guidance has resulted in inadequate and inconsistent responses across police forces.

Internationally, policing organisations have recognised that PPDA exists in worryingly high volumes (CWJ, 2019; Mennicke and Ropes, 2016) and have recommended and implemented diverse solutions.

Independent Investigations (Canada)

Ontario Special Investigations Unit became the first civilian agency with authority to investigate police involved death, serious injury or sexual assault in 1990. It was followed by Alberta in 2008, Nova Scotia and British Columbia in 2012, Manitoba in 2015. Each agency works to a template model with local differences and differing success rates.

All provinces run a civilian-led agency responsible for conducting investigations into serious incidents which may have been the result of the actions of a police officer. However some include off duty as well as on duty incidents, some have the authority to investigate civilian staff, special constables and volunteers, some are only authorised to investigate police officers, some define domestic and sexual violence as requiring independent oversight, others do not, some include sexual offences against members of the public rather than any sexual offence whoever is the victim and some define incidents that fall within their criteria as only those which include physical injury.

Referral of incidents by the police is, in all provinces, mandated by law but the success of these independent bodies is dependent on more than legislation. For instance the Ontario agency, despite being the longest established, has been accused of police bias and 'impotence' to police challenge (Doolittle, 2008). A subsequent investigation found police officers routinely 'obstructed or failed to co-operate' with the agency and that the office of the Attorney General actively undermined their work (Benzie, 2011).

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Model Policy

United States

In 1999, the IACP published a model policy on 'Police Officer Domestic Violence'. Currently used throughout the United States, this model consists of five tenets: prevention, education and training; early warning and intervention; incident response protocols; victim safety and protection; and post-incident administrative/criminal case actions.

The prevention and early warning element emphasises the importance of comprehensive background checks and vetting of candidates including psychological profiling to determine whether a candidate has violent or abusive tendencies. The model identifies training on how to identify early warning signs before conduct escalates into criminal behaviour. Officers are encouraged to self-refer or refer colleagues and the model suggests that families are advised how to make confidential referrals to specialist counselling services. Included in the policy is importance of understanding the specific vulnerabilities of victims of PPDA and the influence of police cultures on the willingness of victims to come forward.

Some States have used the model policy as a framework to develop their own guidance, some, such as Washington State, have legislated to require law enforcement agencies to implement minimum policies predominantly around training and education and others, such as Florida, have developed the model policy further, offering free access to a comprehensive toolkit (Oehme et al, 2016).

Despite model policies, procedures, guidelines and toolkits all being freely available to police agencies, research demonstrates they are reluctant to adopt policies to tackle PPDA or where they are adopted, are reluctant to reinforce policies (Cheema, 2016; Oehme et al, 2016). Evaluating the success of policies that are interpreted or implemented differently is further hampered by a lack of basic data collection on prevalence of PPDA or the extent to which officers are reporting known incidents or suspicions. As in the UK, there is no State or national US agency collecting data on PPDA and that where data is captured, it may be unreliable (Russell and Pappas, 2018).

Recent research suggests that punishment for officers who domestically abuse remains lenient and rarely results in unemployment (Bjorhus and Webster, 2017). Research has identified the way to allow better examination of PPDA is to standardise both police policies and terminology allowing a clarity of implementation and adherence and proposed that meaningful adoption and reporting must be linked to accountability, possibly in the form of State funding (Russell and Pappas, 2018).

United States Prevention Toolkit and Training

In the United States, an evaluation of 'The National Prevention Toolkit on Officer-Involved Domestic Violence' has assessed a police-specific prevention programme (Oehme et al, 2016) with the input of 'multiple national, state, and local stakeholders, including the executive directors of the Police Chiefs Associations' (p8). The toolkit had been made freely available to all police authorities as two online modules; one targeted at officers and the other at senior ranks in supervisory or administrative roles.

Modules use case studies to demonstrate how the same qualities that make an effective police officer can also replicate the distinctive dynamics of a domestic abuser. They cover the impact of PPDA on victims and families as well as the ethical and professional considerations for police departments and consequences for police legitimacy in the community. Options for referring victims to community services are discussed and methods for reporting or sharing concerns about a colleague are explored at length.

The case studies focus solely on men's violence because, 'women use violence more often in self-defense than men, especially in lethal situations; women are more severely injured physically and psychologically than men; women are sexually assaulted and stalked at much higher rates than men; and women have more difficulty than men leaving violent relationships (Kimmel, 2002; Saunders, 2002 cited in Oehme et al, 2016: p20).

Of 852 officers surveyed, 740 were male and two thirds had worked in law enforcement for more than 10 years. 85% of respondents said the Toolkit made them more likely to intervene in suspected cases of PPDA and 65% agreed the Toolkit: 'can be used in my own life to maintain safe relationships' (p14). The evaluation noted that more emphasis was needed on how to identify the primary aggressor to avoid 'arresting women who fight back' (p20).

However, the review notes that even policies mandated by legislation (Domestic Violence Policy Adoption and Implementation, 2004) or freely available tailored training programmes (Oehme et al, 2016) have been ineffective on their own in mitigating PPDA.

Australia

In 1987, reports of serious and unchecked police misconduct lead to the Fitzgerald Inquiry into Queensland Police corruption (1989). The findings resulted in prosecutions against politicians and senior officers as well as identifying the police culture of distorted loyalty to colleagues as a contributory factor, from dismissing or condemning whistle-blowers and failure to enforce the law against fellow police officers to a positive 'contempt' for the justice system (ibid). The recommendations based on the evidence concluded that the police were incapable of investigating themselves impartially and that an independent body was needed to hold them to account.

In 2001, the Crime and Corruption Commission (CCC) was established to proactively investigate crime and corruption in public sector agencies and the Queensland Police (Legal Aid Queensland, 2020). Peer agencies have been established in; New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. New South Wales subsequently established an additional and specific civilian police misconduct oversight body with statutory powers, The Law Enforcement Conduct Commission in 2017 after a 2015 review of police oversight (Tink, 2015). The review analysed 'interstate and overseas models', including the 'Independent Police Complaints Commission of England and Wales' (Tink, 2015: p10) and found there is: 'no so-called 'best practice model' from elsewhere which could be wholly adopted, or even adapted' (ibid: p10).

Of particular note is the recommendation that the new Commission have access to all police complaints and triage to decide which should be referred, rather than allow the police themselves to decide which are passed on. The review also emphasised the Commission's: 'dual responsibilities of proactively targeting serious officer misconduct as well as overseeing complaint handling' (Tink, 2015: p12).

By contrast and in spite of concerns that Queensland Police Service are still resistant to monitoring from the body established for that purpose (Crime and Misconduct Commission, 2010), a new, less punitive system was implemented in 2019 (Queensland Govt). The previous discipline system had

not been reviewed or updated since the Fitzgerald review of 1990 and as such the oversight organisation, the CCC, struggled to adequately investigate, sanction or enforce engagement with the police service. The new system encourages the use of management strategies rather than sanctions, officers will no longer have their salaries reduced and the new system, welcomed by police union and the police minister, has been criticised by civil liberties groups as lacking in accountability (Smee, 2019).

Conclusion

When power is enjoyed without responsibility, the trust we all place in the police force is degraded and betrayed. There is a repetitive pattern to Home Office reports and HMIC and HMICFRS inspections over the years which have highlighted similar concerns of systemic and procedural failures with regard to police perpetrated sexual harassment, domestic and sexual abuse (HMICFRS, 2019b, HMIC, 2014, Home Office, 2011) but in spite of considerable obstacles, increasing numbers of victims are coming forward. Victims of PPDA have to believe there is a robust system in place and the flaws that have been revealed by this short literature review demonstrate that victim hesitation is based on very real fears that they will be worse off by reporting (CWJ, 2019).

The impact of police abusers on the community is serious; bias in their conduct and attitudes will affect their ability to perform their duties, particularly in cases of violence against women. More importantly, not only must police officers enforce the law, they must abide by it.

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