



Learning sponsor



Improving the social work response to domestic abuse

Nicole Jacobs, Domestic abuse commissioner



domestic
abuse
commissioner

Domestic Abuse Commissioner

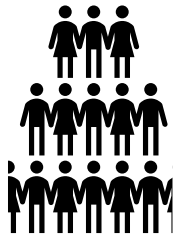
NICOLE JACOBS



“The focus of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be to stand up for victims and survivors, raise public awareness and hold both agencies and government to account in tackling domestic abuse.”

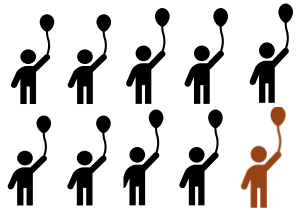
- VICTORIA ATKINS, MINISTER FOR SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABILITY. 18 SEPTEMBER 2019

In numbers

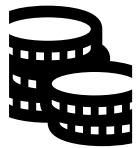


2.3 million
adults affected by domestic
abuse in year ending March
2020 (5.5% of adult population)

8.8 million
adults have experienced
domestic abuse since the age of
16 (20.8% of adult population)

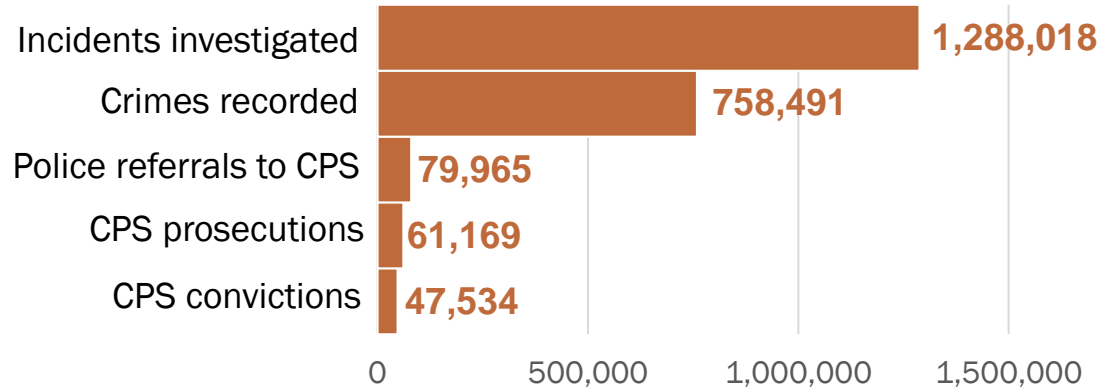


1 in 10
adults lived with
domestic abuse as
children



£66 billion
The estimated annual cost of
domestic abuse to society
(year ending March 2017)

DA flagged police recorded incidents, crimes and prosecutions - year ending March 2020



Purpose

The Problem

- The prevalence of domestic abuse remains too high, and the national and local response (while in some areas improving) is inadequate to the scale and complexity of the problem.
- The response represents a “postcode lottery” with significant variation across England and Wales.
- Not only does the specialist domestic abuse support available vary in both quantity and quality, but the wider community response from health, housing, education or social care varies considerably.

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner

- Nicole Jacobs was appointed Designate Domestic Abuse Commissioner in September 2019. The passage of the Domestic Abuse Act saw her official appointment as the Commissioner.
- The Commissioner will play a key role in holding local and national Government to account in order to improve the response to domestic abuse and shining a light on both good and poor practice and policy.
- All statutory agencies and Government Departments will have a legal duty through the Domestic Abuse Bill to cooperate with the Commissioner and respond publicly to any of her recommendations within 56 days.

Priorities of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner

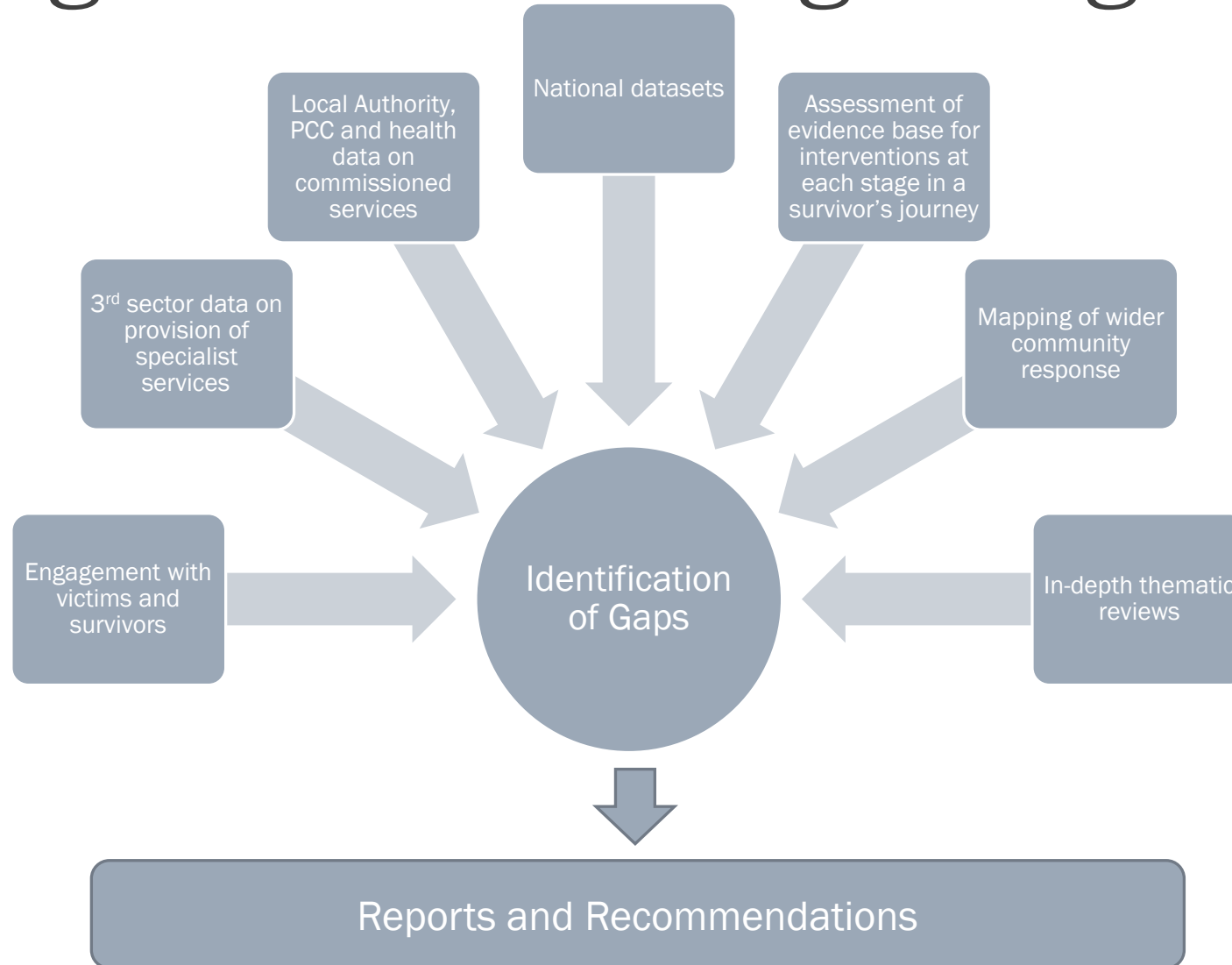
Priorities - Overarching

- To represent and magnify the voices of victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- To continue to develop a framework for mapping domestic abuse services nationally.
- To conduct mapping for domestic abuse services nationally and to subsequently lay reports before parliament and make recommendations.
- To end the 'postcode lottery' for survivors of domestic abuse.
- To improve the national response to domestic abuse and hold both local and national Government to account

Priorities – Timely

- To monitor the impact of Covid-19 on domestic abuse, and support relevant third sector organizations as they coordinate their response to the crisis.
- To ensure the Domestic Abuse Bill is as robust and inclusive as possible.
- To help ensure an integrated and joined up approach to government strategy on domestic abuse and VAWG

Mapping and Monitoring: Long-term



Key policy priorities for the year ahead

- Support for migrant victims and survivors of domestic abuse – working to inform the outcomes of the Supporting Migrant Victims Pilot
- Secure implementation of the recommendation that a firewall be created between the Border Force and the police in the HMICFRS Report on super-complaint
- Creating an oversight mechanism on domestic homicide and suicides to better learn lessons needed to prevent future deaths
- Secure longer-term sustainable funding for both accommodation-based and community-based services
- Improving the experiences of survivors and their children in the family courts

DAC Office: Local & Regional Engagement

As of February, our Practice and Partnerships Team now has four (part-time) Geographic Leads, embedded across England and Wales. They will:

- Be the face, eyes and ears of our Office at the local and regional level, a central point of contact for local leads and partners.
- Look to learn about the key issues, challenges and best practice across their respective regions.
- Facilitate a two-way flow of information both from the local/regional level up to the national, and vice versa, helping us to build a strong picture of what is happening across England and Wales.
- Work closely with our Policy team to ensure that all policy recommendations and priorities are informed by the realities, expertise and insight of what is taking place on the ground.

Responding to Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions have caused significant challenges for both survivors and their children and the organisations (specialist and statutory) working to support them.

Recommendations to Government (evolving)

- Continued investment in public communications campaigns
- Long-term sustainable, sustainable funding- we expect the demand for services to remain high over the next 3-5 years
- Ensuring emergency access to safe accommodation for survivors and children
- Providing emergency financial assistance to survivors
- Ensuring child contact is safe and not use as a tool for abuse / coercive control

The Domestic Abuse Act

This landmark piece of legislation, first introduced July 2019 and re-introduced in March 2020, received Royal Assent on 29 April 2021.

Key elements of the Act are to:

- Establish the Domestic Abuse Commissioner as a statutory office holder
- Create a statutory definition of Domestic Abuse to ensure its properly understood, considered unacceptable and challenged across agencies and in public attitudes
- Provide for a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Order
- Place a duty on local authorities in England to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation

The Domestic Abuse Act (continued)

- Prohibit perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in the family courts in England and Wales
- Ensure that anyone made homeless as a result of domestic abuse is automatic in priority need for housing
- Create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal courts (for example, to enable them to give evidence via a video link)
- Place the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing

The Domestic Abuse Act (continued)

- The Government have extended the remit of Part 4 to ensure LAs assess the impact on community-based services. The government have also committed to consulting on the provision of community-based services ahead of the upcoming Victim's Bill
- A new standalone offence of non-fatal strangulation – 29% of domestic homicides include strangulation
- The coercive control offence will be extended to include post-separation abuse
- Threats to share intimate images will be a criminal offence
- All DHRs will be shared with the Commissioner to help us build a stronger oversight mechanism on domestic homicide

DA Act: Commissioner's Role

- **Part 4 Oversight:** DA Commissioner will sit on Ministerial-led National Steering Group, established to monitor outcomes from local reporting – which now includes assessing the impact of the accommodation-based services duty on community-based services. .
- **Mapping of CBS:** DAC Office's work to map the current provision of community-based services will be used to inform future decisions about expanding the new statutory duty to include these services.
- **Duty to Cooperate:** Specified public bodies will be under a duty to cooperate with DA Commissioner - they and government Ministers will be required to respond to recommendations/requests made to them within 56 days.
- **DHRs:** DHRs will be required to be shared with DAC Office as well as the Home Office. Ongoing discussion about national oversight mechanisms for DHRs and role for DA Commissioner.

Questions?

Contact: commissioner@domesticabusecommissioner.independent.gov.uk

CommunityCare
live21
BDC, London | 12-13 October

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