

Domestic Abuse Action Plan 2019-22

for Hertfordshire



Hertfordshire Constabulary's response to domestic abuse

A Message from Charlie Hall, Chief Constable of Hertfordshire Constabulary



I am pleased to introduce Hertfordshire Constabulary's Domestic Abuse Action Plan for 2019 to 2022. This plan sets out how we and our partners intend to improve our response to this often complex and challenging issue during this time.

Domestic abuse affects people of all ages, walks of life and backgrounds, and can take many forms including financial, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as violence.

Victims are often some of the most at-risk members of our community. The abuse they suffer often makes them fearful and isolated and as a result many find it difficult or impossible to reach out for support, less still support a police investigation.

In 2014, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Service (HMICFRS) published the report "Everyone's Business: Improving the Response to Domestic Abuse". It highlighted a series of both national and local recommendations for each force to progress and publish in a Domestic Abuse Action Plan.

We published our previous action plan in 2016 detailing how we were going to improve our response to Domestic Abuse between then and 2019. That year we also launched – with the support of the Police and Crime Commissioner – the Constabulary's specialist Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit (DAISU). The unit deals with all reports of abuse occurring in intimate relationships and provides an enhanced safeguarding and investigative response.

In order to deal with increasing numbers of reports, the unit has received consistent investment and now has in excess of 70 officers and staff. It is the largest single, specialised unit within the Constabulary and has pushed forward developing best practice in the

field of both safeguarding victims and convicting dangerous offenders.

Tackling domestic abuse is not just the responsibility of one unit though. Across the force we prioritise tackling domestic abuse, from the continued training of front line officers and staff to prioritising high risk cases in daily force-wide management meetings.

We recognise the many challenges that victims face and have continued to work with partners to provide access to independent help and advice services.

We have also pushed forward with use of technology such as body worn video to support evidence led prosecutions and worked with schools to help protect children who may have witnessed abuse within their home.

Our aim, and that of our partners, is to deliver the best possible service to those affected by domestic abuse, give victims the confidence to report these matters, to protect people from harm and ultimately to reduce the extent of domestic abuse in Hertfordshire. The following action plan will detail much of the progress we have made as well as show how and what areas we intend to improve.

Charlie Hall

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title.

**Chief Constable
of Hertfordshire Constabulary**

A message from David Lloyd Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire



Victims must be at the heart of what we do. Preventing lives being destroyed by Domestic Abuse remains one of my top priorities.

I welcome this dedicated Action Plan which gives police and local partners the ability to tackle domestic abuse together and more effectively. Helping those being mistreated is a core responsibility of my office and the police.

While much progress has been made to give them the confidence to come forward, there is always more that can be done.

Through my role in commissioning support services for victims in Hertfordshire, I will continue to ensure they are tailored to their needs with the responses they require. My office has made substantial investments to support a specialist police unit focussed exclusively on this crime with the creation of Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding Unit (DAISU).

In order to deal with increasing numbers of reports, DAISU has received it now has in excess of 70 officers and staff. It is the largest single, specialised unit within the Constabulary and has pushed forward developing best practice in the field of both safeguarding victims and convicting dangerous offenders.

I am also ensuring that areas where there has been under-provision in the past are addressed, such as for male victims of domestic abuse.

DAISU works together with our pioneering Beacon Victim Care Centre, which serves victims of both reported and unreported crime from across the region.

Extended opening hours ensure that six days a week Beacon's dedicated team can now meet those accessing the service in a location of their choosing across Hertfordshire.

It is also vital that this action plan is forward looking, taking into account the many advantages brought about by technology. We have invested in the use of Body Worn Video cameras for officers, which has enabled more cases to proceed without the victim being present.

Working with the court service the increased use of Live Link video has enabled vulnerable victims to give evidence remotely.

It is an encouraging sign of the progress that we are making that during my term the Crown Prosecution Service in the county has recorded the highest ever number of police referrals, prosecutions and convictions for domestic abuse.

Tackling domestic abuse is a complex and challenging area, but getting it right will be a prize worth winning. Therefore I wholeheartedly support this new plan.

David Lloyd

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Lloyd". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name.

**Police and Crime Commissioner
for Hertfordshire**

Domestic abuse - our journey so far

Hertfordshire Constabulary recognises the impact domestic abuse has on victims, children, families and the wider community. Working with our partners and utilising the skills of our dedicated officers and specialist staff, we are committed to making people safe, providing the right support whilst robustly dealing with offenders through quick and effective action.

- There continues to be a year on year increase in the reporting of domestic abuse offences in Hertfordshire and we work closely with partners to encourage reporting and increase confidence in the policing response when allegations are made.
- A dedicated Domestic Abuse Investigation & Safeguarding Unit (DAISU) has been operating in the county since 2016 and is managed within the remit of Hertfordshire Constabulary's Safeguarding Command. The Constabulary continues to invest heavily in the DAISU and it is currently the largest investigative team within the Force.
- DAISU's investigation teams are supported by a specialist safeguarding unit that reviews all high risk domestic abuse incidents. It provides expert safeguarding advice and will take ownership of safeguarding where appropriate.
- There has been a continued willingness to develop and learn about the different forms that abuse can take and better understand offences such as coercive control and stalking and harassment and the significant impact they have on victims. The team continue to utilise all available legislation, criminal and civil, to support victims of domestic abuse.
- The external website has been updated to include the ability to make Clare's Law applications online. The Force's 'One Stop' DA intranet site has been completely refreshed in order to make essential information quicker and easier to access by officers and police staff. There is information, graphics and videos describing forms of abuse and highlighting best practice.
- Front line officers have been issued with body worn video cameras (BWV) whereby officers are instructed to use these at every incident of domestic abuse they attend. This has assisted in the gathering of evidence and obtaining first accounts from victims both of which support 'evidence led prosecutions'.
- The establishment of domestic abuse courts in Hertfordshire has shortened the wait for court hearings and recognises the importance of swift judicial action necessary to support victims.
- The safeguarding agenda remains a priority for Hertfordshire Constabulary whereby prioritising the needs of vulnerable victims is key when making policing decisions. This message is routinely delivered across the Force and is championed by the Safeguarding Command Team. This message is routinely delivered across the Force and is championed by the Safeguarding Command Team.
- Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is well established in Hertfordshire with good attendance from recommended agencies. There is a MARAC manager, deputy manager and three coordinators funded by the Constabulary and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. A full review by SafeLives has been commissioned to further enhance and improve MARAC.
- The governance structure across the partnership ensures senior level support, drive and oversight to improving the services offered to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

- Implementation of multi-agency scrutiny and learning panels focusing on MARAC, CPS submissions and investigations that have not reached the criminal threshold to identify learning and best practice for investigators.
- The DAISU's team commitment to protecting vulnerable victims is highlighted by a number of successful convictions for coercive control including securing the first conviction for this offence in England and Wales as a standalone offence.
- Identification and multi-agency training of a Constabulary Sunflower Strategic lead and domestic abuse champions.
- Ongoing work with partners from CPS and Courts to identify and improve the victim's journey through the criminal justice system.
- The first Constabulary-led multi-agency honour based abuse and forced marriage conference has taken place providing significantly increased awareness of these issues across the partnership.
- In 2017/18, a Chief Superintendent-led project group reviewed Operation Oak, the Constabulary's response to domestic abuse. As a result the DA Standard Operating Procedure was updated to reflect changes in the law; use of BWV to secure best evidence was promoted throughout the Force; the Operation Oak intranet pages were updated to make sure all policies and procedures are easy to access. A second project group is running in 2018/19.
- The domestic abuse charity Safer Places has launched their new Hertfordshire Stalking Service in early 2019. The funding, from the Ministry of Housing, will support six qualified Independent Stalking Advocacy Caseworkers (ISACs) working in the county. They will supply support, advice and advocacy, risk assessment and safety planning, counselling and other services to victims of stalking.
- The necessity for refresher and continued professional development for all members of Hertfordshire Constabulary remains an important principle going forward:
 - **Frontline Officers**
All officers receiving detailed domestic abuse training as part of their initial training in order to help officers and staff recognise vulnerability, different types of abuse and to recognise forced marriage and Honour Based Abuse. Officers are receiving refresher training to enhance their knowledge and maintain their knowledge of new legislation and to provide a broader understanding of safeguarding options. All training has been designed to enable and encourage officers to have an evidence led approach to investigations.
 - **Specialist Domestic Abuse Investigator training**
All officers and staff working within DAISU have mandatory training days and a comprehensive domestic abuse training cycle has been developed to provide CPD and refresher training to all officers and staff who work as specialist domestic abuse investigators. This training is also made available to all officers across the Safeguarding Command to build a broader knowledge base of domestic abuse offences and options. Again all training has been designed to enable and encourage officers to have an evidence led approach to investigations.
 - **Continual Professional Development (CPD) for Detectives**
Training is being delivered as part of CPD development for all detectives which provides a greater understanding of domestic abuse offences and safeguarding for all officers working investigative roles.

Domestic Abuse Actions 2019-2022

