Identification, assessment and management of serial or potentially dangerous domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators

Eight principles to assist forces

Overarching principles

Safety and support for victims is paramount. The identification and assessment processes should help to inform the management of offenders, to help prevent re-victimisation. Identification and management of serial and dangerous perpetrators should focus both on individuals who pose a significant danger to a single victim, and on those who cause harm to multiple victims. The definition of 'dangerous' includes risks of causing or using psychological and emotional harm, as well as lethal or sub-lethal physical violence.

Principle 1: Forces should have processes in place for identifying serial or potentially dangerous domestic abuse (DA) and stalking perpetrators

Alongside existing processes of identification, including DA risk assessment and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), approaches should take account of the recency, frequency and gravity of incidents, as well as whether they have been abusive with one or multiple victims (RFGV). Including this approach is likely to help identify an additional cohort of serial perpetrators who may pose a risk of harm to many individuals, rather than just one victim. Algorithms based on RFGV have been developed by a number of forces (see the 'Relevant practice' examples below). While these algorithms provide an indication of potential DA risk, professional judgement is still required.

Evidence suggests that some DA homicides are committed by people not previously known to the police for DA. Consideration should be given to how information from agencies such as health and housing can be used as part of the identification and assessment process. However, this may not be possible unless there are existing local protocols to enable rapid information sharing.

Non-domestic stalkers may require other identification and assessment approaches, as they fall outside a primary DA risk assessment or MARAC process and, by the nature of obsession and fixation on a person, they may not appear frequently in police data.

Relevant practice

Northumbria Police, West Midlands Police, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and other forces using Drive or multi-agency tasking and coordination (MATAC) approaches have developed algorithms based on RFGV. Forces have been refining these algorithms to better take account of DA risk factors other than physical violence.

Principle 2: When a potentially dangerous perpetrator of DA or stalking is identified, a senior decision-maker should assess the severity and immediacy of the risk posed, and should decide whether to enter their details onto the Police National Computer (PNC) or Police National Database (PND) and the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) or local management database

Serial and/or potentially dangerous DA and stalking perpetrators should be entered on ViSOR or another local database, either at the appropriate risk management level or as a potentially dangerous person (PDP). PNC will be flagged accordingly. Risk management plans will be entered onto ViSOR or another suitable local database, and due regard will be given to exit strategies. Although ViSOR has traditionally been used to manage only sex offenders, it can and should be used to manage PDPs, including serial DA perpetrators.

All activity to manage serial or potentially dangerous perpetrators of DA and stalking must reflect human rights considerations and must comply with the management of police information (MoPI) principles, particularly as some of those identified may not have a conviction. Interventions to manage dangerous perpetrators must be the minimum required to achieve legitimate policing purposes. MoPI principles should be applied to ensure that data entered on police IT systems is accurate and up to date. Personal information that is no longer needed should be removed.

Relevant practice

Drive, MATAC, Multi-Agency Stalking Intervention Programme (MASIP), Op Dauntless.

Principle 3: Forces should be mindful of the College risk principles in their approaches to identifying and assessing risk

It is not possible to manage away risk entirely. To ensure risk assessments are as good as they can be, they should be informed by up-to-date and relevant information, and must be based on informed professional judgement made by people with the appropriate expertise and experience.

Relevant practice

app.college.police.uk/app-content/risk-2/risk/#risk-principles

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Principle 4: Forces should ensure that there is no duplication of activity to manage the identified cohort – for example, investigation or safeguarding, MARACs and multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs)

Forces should: have systems in place to check that identification of nominals for intervention do not overlap with other existing processes; make decisions about the appropriate panel for managing risk based on the context and risk posed; and ensure that other organisations are not already intervening with the perpetrator or family.

Principle 5: Forces should regularly refresh searches of those who are of concern but who are not subject to intensive management, to identify whether there has been any change to their circumstance that would affect their risk assessment

Forces should concentrate on the cohort of the most potentially dangerous perpetrators identified through the RFGV process. Cases where management is being undertaken will require plans to scale back and end intervention. These plans will take account of changing risk. Forces should ensure that those outside of the managed cohort are subject to routine safeguarding and management processes.

Principle 6: Serial or potentially dangerous perpetrators should be managed through a multi-agency approach

Forces should ensure that panels are established or that existing ones are used to assess and manage this cohort of perpetrators. Members of panels should have a current operational understanding of the **effective approaches to managing DA and stalking perpetrators** used to keep victims and their families safe. Panel members should research and share their agency information relating to the identified perpetrator under specific information-sharing agreements (ISAs). Independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) or local DA specialist support services will be required to coordinate between the panel and the victim(s), particularly where activity may heighten the risk to the victim.

Relevant practice

Evaluations of existing processes suggest that panels should include representatives from policing, probation, housing, social care and health care (mental health, substance misuse), as well as perpetrator case managers (one-to-one, RESPECT-accredited perpetrator programmes) and an IDVA.

Perpetrator work needs to be cognisant of the **whole systems approach** and coordinated community response.

Principle 7: Intervention options will need to be available and relevant to engaging and non-engaging perpetrators

There are some standard interventions that can be considered for all cases, such as: the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme or common law duty to disclose, notification of address, change of address and new relationship; an appropriate RESPECT-accredited perpetrator programme; and relevant prevention orders.

Without statutory footing for the management of such perpetrators, enforcement of prohibitions or conditions may be problematic. However, the introduction of the new DA prevention orders and stalking protection orders will provide a legal basis and could be applied for if the criteria are met.

Relevant practice

The **College's public protection tactical menu of options** provides information on a range of interventions.

Principle 8: Evaluate implementation and outcomes of interventions to ensure they have the best chance of achieving the desired outcomes

Forces should be clear about the outcome they are trying to achieve and understand how the intervention will support the goal. Outcomes will likely relate to changing offenders' behaviour, and improvement in the safety and protection of victims and children. Evaluation of impact on safety is problematic due to the limitations of police data for measuring re-victimisation. Longitudinal follow-up interviews with victims are desirable, but can be resource-intensive and need to be undertaken sensitively. A wide range of measures should therefore be considered to examine whether key outcomes are being achieved.

Evaluation of interventions will support continuous improvement and establish an evidence base that can be used across forces.