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Title:

**An investigation into the effectiveness of policing
procedures in dealing with domestic violence**

Joel Phillips

2222443

BSc (Hons) Professional Police Practice

Word count: 7202

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, for their invaluable guidance, support and encouragement throughout the course of this research. Their insight and feedback have been instrumental in shaping this dissertation.

I would also like to thank the police officers who participated in the survey for their time and honesty, without which this study would not have been possible.

Finally, I am grateful for my family and friends for their patience, understanding, and continuous support throughout my academic journey.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the efficacy of policing methods in addressing domestic violence within the UK. Employing a quantitative research methodology, the study conducted a survey of 100 police officers to evaluate their views on current practices, the sufficiency of training, their confidence during interventions, and the effects of recent legislation. The research highlights significant obstacles faced by officers, such as victim cooperation, inconsistent training, and insufficient resources.

The study expands upon existing literature by emphasising the disparity between policy formulation and its execution at the frontline. The findings indicate that although many officers regard the procedures as generally effective, considerable challenges persist concerning training, legal knowledge, and operational support. The results emphasise the necessity for more uniform training, improved communication regarding legislative updates, and enhanced collaboration among multiple agencies.

This dissertation provides actionable recommendations to enhance police responses, including compulsory training, clearer procedural directives, and increased allocation of resources. Readers can anticipate a comprehensive analysis of officer experiences, bolstered by pertinent literature, aimed at guiding future enhancements in domestic violence policing policies and practices.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background

Domestic violence represents a persistent and complex social challenge that affects individuals, families, and communities both in the United Kingdom and worldwide. As reported by the Office for National Statistics (2023), approximately 2.4 million adults in the UK have encountered domestic abuse within the last year, highlighting the magnitude and seriousness of this issue. Domestic violence includes various forms of abusive conduct, such as physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial abuse (Women's Aid, 2024), frequently manifesting within intimate or familial relationships. In recent years, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the harmful effects of coercive and controlling behaviour, which is a more subtle type of abuse that erodes the autonomy and safety of victims.

Law enforcement is essential in the prevention, investigation, and response to domestic violence. Police personnel frequently serve as the initial contact for victims in need of assistance and support, making their reactions crucial for the safeguarding of victims, the accountability of offenders, and the public's trust in the justice system. In the last twenty years, numerous policy reforms and training programs have been implemented to enhance the efficacy of police responses to domestic violence, focusing specifically on risk assessment, victim safeguarding, and collaboration among partner agencies.

Nonetheless, despite these initiatives, considerable apprehensions persist regarding the consistency and efficacy of policing methods in addressing domestic violence. Prominent cases, critical evaluation reports (HMICFRS, 2019), and research conducted by Andy Myhill (Myhill and Hohl, 2016) alongside Amanda Robinson (Robinson, 2009) have underscored ongoing deficiencies in practice, which include insufficient training, variable enforcement of procedures, a limited knowledge of legislation, and inadequate support for victims.

Moreover, the enactment of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 represented a pivotal legal advancement, establishing new protective measures such as Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) and placing increased focus on the recognition of coercive and controlling

behaviours. Nevertheless, uncertainties persist regarding the degree to which these legislative modifications have been effectively conveyed to, and enacted by, frontline police officers.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

This dissertation specifically examines the effectiveness of policing procedures in addressing domestic violence from the viewpoint of police officers. Instead of focusing on victim experiences or court outcomes, this research takes an operational perspective, investigating how officers view the current procedures, their ability to apply them, and the obstacles they face in the process.

The study concentrates on five key areas:

1. The perceived effectiveness of current policing procedures in responding to domestic violence.
2. The adequacy of training and preparation received by officers.
3. Officers' confidence and decision-making when handling domestic violence incidents.
4. Awareness and perceived impact of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
5. The key barriers police officers face in responding effectively to domestic violence.

By concentrating on the experiences of frontline policing, this research offers valuable insights into the operational realities that affect the effectiveness or constraints of domestic violence procedures. The study is confined to a single police force in the UK, with data collected via a structured questionnaire administered to 100 police officers.

These goals aim to create a detailed understanding of the operational dynamics of policing procedures, emphasising both their strengths and weaknesses, as well as identifying areas for improvement.

To achieve these goals, a quantitative research methodology has been implemented, utilising a structured questionnaire. This approach facilitates the gathering of extensive, generalisable data concerning officers' perceptions, experiences, and levels of awareness.

This study is both timely and relevant for various reasons. Firstly, despite significant legislative and policy advancements, domestic violence continues to be a significant public safety issue in the UK. Recent data and media coverage reveal that victims still encounter obstacles in obtaining protection and justice, while perpetrators are not consistently held responsible. Policing plays a vital role in tackling these deficiencies; however, current research indicates that enhancements in policy do not always correspond with enhancements in practice.

Secondly, prior studies have frequently concentrated on the experiences of victims, legal structures, or collaborative responses among various agencies. Although these viewpoints are crucial, there has been comparatively less emphasis on comprehending the perspectives and experiences of frontline police officers. Given that they are the ones directly tasked with executing procedures, their insights provide significant understanding of the effectiveness of these procedures in practical scenarios.

Thirdly, the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 signifies a notable advancement in the legal framework concerning domestic abuse. However, preliminary findings indicate that the awareness and implementation of the Act may vary among police personnel (HMICFRS, 2021). This study aids in assessing whether the introduction of new legislative instruments has resulted in enhanced practices at the frontline.

Finally, this study addresses gaps highlighted by scholars, who have called for more research into the operational challenges police face when dealing with domestic abuse, particularly regarding training, risk assessment, and officer confidence.

1.3 Structure

This dissertation is structured into five chapters, each of which contributes to addressing the research aim and objectives:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides background context for the study, explains its focus and scope, highlights its relevance within existing research, states the research questions and objectives, and outlines the dissertation structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review critically examines existing research on domestic violence, policing responses, officer training, legislative developments and operational challenges. It identifies gaps in the literature, such as the limited research on officer perspectives.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Planning

This chapter outlines the research design, including the rationale for using a quantitative questionnaire approach. It details the sampling strategy, data collection methods, and ethical considerations, providing transparency and allowing for replication of the study.

Chapter 4: Analysis of Results

This chapter offers an analysis of the empirical results derived from the questionnaire responses. It systematically addresses each research objective, presenting both descriptive statistics and a critical interpretation of the data. The findings are compared with existing literature to uncover consistencies, contradictions, and new insights.

Chapter 5: Findings and Conclusion

The final chapter summarises the key findings and conclusions drawn from research. It discusses the implications of the results for policing practice, policy and training. Practical recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness of policing procedures in dealing with domestic violence, and areas for future research are identified.

[1.4 Conclusion](#)

In conclusion, this dissertation explores a topic of considerable relevance and social importance by assessing the efficacy of policing methods in addressing domestic violence, as perceived by police officers. By emphasising the experiences of frontline officers and the operational difficulties they encounter, the research enhances our comprehension of the ways in which policies and procedures are implemented in practice, as well as identifying areas for enhancement to more effectively safeguard victims and ensure accountability for offenders.

Chapter 2 - Literature review

2.1 Introduction

With an average of almost 100 domestic abuse-related offenses reported to the police in England and Wales each hour, domestic violence is still an extensive issue in the UK (Refuge, 2022).

It continues to be a significant public health and social justice concern, with nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men encountering abuse at some point in their lifetime (Office for National Statistics, 2023). The involvement of police forces in addressing domestic violence is crucial, as they frequently serve as the initial contact for individuals seeking assistance after experiencing abuse, making their response critical in shaping victim outcomes, ensuring safety and promoting justice. Over the past two decades, policing procedures in the UK have evolved significantly to address domestic violence, reflecting broader legal reforms, shifts in societal attitudes, and increasing awareness of the complexities involved.

In the past, police reactions to domestic abuse were often limited or dismissive since it was thought to be a private business. However, the criminal justice system's attitude to domestic abuse has been redesigned due to changes in legislation and procedures. The application of risk assessment tools such as the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Harassment) model, specialised response units, and multi-agency frameworks like MARACs (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences) are essential components of this evolution.

There are still concerns about these strategies' effectiveness despite these developments. Critics argue that systemic problems, insufficient training, and implementation inconsistencies continue to hinder the ability of police to respond effectively, particularly for communities that are marginalised. With a focus on significant interventions including historical advancements, current regulations, risk assessment frameworks, specialised units, and agency collaborations, this literature review examines the effectiveness of policing practices in the UK. It also highlights the opinions of the police and administration as well as public opinion.

2.2 History

Legislative landmarks such as the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (Health, 2020) indicated a major shift in the UK's approach to domestic violence by giving police more arrest powers and allowing courts to issue restraining orders after a conviction.

Domestic violence and criminal justice issues were also acknowledged. A more comprehensive definition of abuse that encompasses coercive and controlling behaviour in addition to physical, mental, and financial abuse has been made available more recently by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (The Law Society, 2022). More safeguards were also included, including Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs).

Another important turning point was the legal recognition of coercive control in 2015, which was made legal by Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 (Coercive control and the law, 2023). This development changed the focus of policing from single incidents of violence to patterns of psychological and manipulative abuse. Although this law may enhance victim protection, police officers often lack the knowledge and training necessary to recognise and document coercive control, which leads to under-enforcement, claim Bishop and Bettinson (Bishop and Bettinson, 2017).

Police responses are additionally influenced by guidelines issued by the College of Policing (College of Policing, 2018). These guidelines provide operational frameworks that support the concept of "positive action," which encourages officers to make arrests or carry out enforcement action in response to domestic incidents. Maggie Blyth (Police and partners leading the way to confront VAWG, 2024), the National Policing Lead for Domestic Abuse, supports these efforts by providing oversight and working to maintain consistency across forces.

Critics like Kelly and Westmarland (Kelly and Westmarland, 2016) argue that despite these strong frameworks, policy implementation often fails, particularly because of a lack of resources and imbalances in local forces' leadership. Furthermore, victims may experience re-traumatisation due to the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system, especially if

support services are insufficient or badly organised. Making sure that laws are applied consistently and victim-centred on the ground is a constant issue.

2.3 Current Policies

The principle of “positive action”, endorsed by the College of Policing, encourages officers to take decisive action such as arresting a person, if there is sufficient evidence during a domestic incident. The goal is to prevent further harm and reduce repeat victimisation.

Research by Hoyle and Saunders (Hoyle and Sanders, 2000) showed that early implementation of arrest focused policies, as seen in the Thames Valley Police, led to higher victim satisfaction and reduced reoffending in the short term.

However, mandatory arrest and positive action are not the same thing. Studies have shown that police officers’ discretion can still produce a range of results. Considering that (Robinson et al., 2016), officer perception, organisational culture, and workload pressures all influence how arrest policies are applied. In certain instances, victims have expressed feeling disbelieved or blamed, particularly if they were unwilling or unable to assist with the prosecution.

Arrest policies might also have had unforeseen consequences. Victims who are emotionally or financially dependent on their abuser, for instance, might be discouraged from contacting the police out of concern that an arrest might escalate the violence or upset the family dynamic. (Barlow et al., 2020) highlighted that victims were especially reluctant to contact the police during the COVID-19 pandemic, when lockdowns heightened isolation, because they were afraid of reprisals in cramped domestic settings.

Another concern is the dual-arrest phenomenon, where both parties are arrested due to a lack of clarity in identifying the primary aggressor. This approach undermines victim confidence and reflects insufficient officer training in trauma informed response.

To address these challenges, police forces have adopted body-worn cameras and mobile evidence collection apps to improve documentation and reduce reliance on victim testimony. These tools have shown promise in facilitating prosecutions even when victims withdraw, though ethical concerns about privacy and consent persist.

To help to assess the level of risk that victims face, police forces throughout the United Kingdom use the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment) risk assessment model, which was introduced in 2009. Officers fill out a standardised questionnaire that considers factors such as the escalation of violence, coercive behaviour, threats, and past incidents. High risk cases are typically referred to MARACs for a coordinated response.

Robinson praised DASH for its methodical approach, expressing that it contributes to consistency in frontline decision-making (Robinson et al., 2016). Others, however, have questioned how well it captures the nuances of psychological abuse, coercion, and control. According to Myhill and Hohl (Myhill and Hohl, 2016), DASH's reliance on victim disclosure and officer discretion may lead to inconsistent classification, especially in cases where victims are reluctant to provide sensitive information due to trauma or fear.

Moreover, research indicates that officer typically perform DASH assessments as a procedural formality, rather than as a dynamic tool directing real-time decisions (Aplin, 2017). When risk assessments are impulsive or shallow, they fail to reflect a victim's lived reality. For hidden victims who may display unusual abuse patterns, such as those with disabilities, elderly people, or members of minority ethnic groups, this is especially concerning.

Tools for risk assessments are being improved using technology. To find high-risk patterns and repeat offenders, some police forces are testing predictive analytics software that combines DASH data with historical crime data. Although this strategy could enhance proactive policing, it additionally raises up moral questions of algorithm bias and data privacy.

A major obstacle to the effective application of DASH remains training. When evaluating risk in complex instances, particularly those involving minors or diverse cultures, officers usually complain that they are not adequately prepared (Barlow et al., 2020). The College of Policing has responded to this by implementing scenario-based workshops and e-learning courses that are designed to enhance officer competency.

In summary, while arrest policies have strengthened the police's response to domestic abuse, their effectiveness is hindered by variability in implementation, victim mistrust, and systematic barriers that limit victim agency. Enhancing officer training, using evidence-based

decision-making tools, and fostering a trauma informed approach are critical to overcoming these issues. Although DASH has become known as an essential part of risk-based policing in situations of domestic violence, its effectiveness depends upon how well it is implemented, ongoing training, and an improved understanding of the varied experiences of victims. Adaptive, culturally aware, and trauma-informed methods for assessment need to be given top priority in future developments.

2.4 Public Perception

Public perception is an essential indicator when measuring the success of policing strategies, especially in crimes such as domestic violence where victims' willingness to report incidents and seek help often relies on trust in law enforcement agencies. Although there has been some progress over the years, there are still significant gaps affecting how the public views police effectiveness in this domain. The effectiveness of policing procedures in addressing domestic violence is still a subject of intense public debate and academic scrutiny.

Historically, police involvement in domestic violence has been minimal since it was often seen as a private matter. Nonetheless, adjustments to procedure and policy, including the implementation of mandatory arrest provisions and specialised domestic violence units, have attempted to enhance responsiveness. Increasing victim protection and making sure perpetrators are held accountable are the goals of these actions (Hoyle, 2008). However, perceptions on the effectiveness of them vary among the general population.

Many victims still express dissatisfaction with police reactions, noting to poor protection, victim-blaming attitudes, and insensitive case management (Hester, 2011). The quantity and type of police engagement are critical to positive results, according to a study by Myhill (Myhill and Kelly, 2023), which found that victims who had contact with specialised domestic violence officers were more likely to feel believed and supported. This supports the idea that the professionalism and consistency of the response, not just the procedural framework, are directly related to public confidence.

Community engagement efforts and developed police training on domestic violence have demonstrated potential in improving public trust. When police officers display empathy, offer clear communication, and take promptly preventative actions, victims and communities report increased satisfaction (Robinson, Myhill and Wire, 2017). However, different regions

apply these policies differently, which results in differences in victim experiences and public trust.

Furthermore, because of institutional biases and negative encounters in the past, marginalised groups including immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and ethnic minorities frequently display higher levels of mistrust regarding the effectiveness of the police. According to Douglas and Fitzgerald (Douglas and Fitzgerald 2018), these groups may refrain from reporting abuse out of fear of additional victimisation or deportation. Mistrust is increased and the perceived effectiveness of policing practices is decreased when there is a lack of an inclusive and culturally competent policing approach.

Public perceptions are also influenced by stories in the media, which frequently draw attention to police responses to known domestic incidents. While this kind of coverage may lead to changes in policy, it may also undermine public trust in the effectiveness of the police. This dynamic emphasises how crucial meaningful involvement of victims and open, accountable police are. For example, a survey conducted after Sarah Everard was tragically murdered by a serving Metropolitan Police officer found that 40% of males and 47% of women had less faith in the police (Geoghegan, 2021).

In summary, although police methods for preventing domestic violence have changed, public opinion is still varied and greatly impacted by personal experiences, media portrayals, and the inclusiveness of police methods. Policing needs to demonstrate true victim-centred engagement, equitable service delivery, and continuous accountability for it to be considered effective.

[2.5 Police/Government Perception](#)

Over the past few decades, policing practices intended to address domestic violence have undergone significant change, reflecting an increase in law enforcement and governmental officials' knowledge of the problems. Even if there has been progress, concerns still exist over how well the current processes protect victims and hold offenders accountable.

Domestic violence is recognised as a serious and complex crime from the perspective of police, demanding a proactive and victim-centred approach. Among the strategies that have gained significant support are the introduction of mandatory arrest legislation, risk assessment tools, and specialised domestic violence units. Both victim safety and police

reaction are intended to be improved by these measures. Their effectiveness has been unbalanced, though. Critics argue that mandatory arrests may discourage victims from contacting the police if they are afraid of negative consequences, even while they can send a zero-tolerance message (Hirschel and Buzawa, 2013). Furthermore, results are greatly influenced by police discretion, training, and attitudes toward domestic abuse; some officers continue to see such instances as private family matters (Robinson et al., 2016).

Government initiatives have used funds and legislation to assist police work. The UK took an important move through the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which included new protective measures such Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs) and provided a clearer statutory definition of abuse (Home Office, 2021). Additionally, to better assist victims, government organisations encourage relationships between police, social services, and health professionals through multi-agency collaboration.

Furthermore, resource limitations, inconsistent application of policies, and variability in officer training affect the quality of police responses (HMICFRS, 2019).

In conclusion, even though law enforcement and government agencies have made significant progress in creating standards to deal with domestic abuse, systemic issues limit their effectiveness. Enhancing policing outcomes in domestic violence cases requires ongoing reform, better training, consistent enforcement of policies, and more robust victim support systems.

[2.6 Comparative Analysis](#)

The problem of domestic abuse is still widespread worldwide and crosses socio-economic, cultural, and geographic barriers. The effectiveness of police procedures in preventing domestic violence has been strongly debated, with different jurisdictions demonstrating differing methods and outcomes. This comparative analysis examines the advantages, disadvantages, and new developments of the policing systems in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia.

The introduction of Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPNs) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPOs) has significantly improved the policing response to domestic abuse in the United Kingdom within the past two decades. Even in the absence of a criminal charge, these actions enable police to provide victims immediate protection. In addition, the

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 broadened the definition of abuse and gave police greater powers. However, the police' inconsistent answers and lack of specialised training continue to attract criticism (HMICFRS, 2021).

On the other hand, several states in the US have introduced mandatory arrest legislation, which require police to arrest the offender if there is probable cause. This strategy was first commended for its deterrent effect and originated from the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment (Sherman and Berk, 1984). However, later studies produced conflicting findings, raising issues with victim alienation and dual arrests (Hirschel et al., 2007). Additionally, the United States puts a high value on victim advocacy and community policing, both of which have demonstrated potential for improved case outcomes and victim satisfaction.

Australia has a more integrative approach that combines social services and law enforcement. A coordinated approach that involves the police, health, and legal agencies is encouraged under the "Australian National Police Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children" (Australian Government, 2019). Police forces with specialised domestic violence units, especially in Victoria and New South Wales, have shown success in lowering recidivism and enhancing victim trust (Richards, 2011). However, problems still exist, particularly in indigenous areas where cooperation in reporting is hindered by a long-standing mistrust of law enforcement.

Across the three countries, the need for trauma informed training, inter-agency collaboration and consistent policy enforcement is clear. While there is no universally superior method, Australia's thorough and victim-centred approach is more advantageous in the long term. To improve police methods and make sure they address the numerous requirements of survivors of domestic abuse, further research and international education are required.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology and Planning

3.1 Introduction

In response to growing public scrutiny and evolving legal frameworks, I am conducting this study to explore how police officers view, respond to, and handle domestic violence cases. The objective of this research is to critically assess how effectively current police procedures handle domestic violence. This topic is significant not only for law enforcement but also for ensuring victims' safety and justice.

A review of the literature has identified a few concerns. Some studies commend police for improving reporting and victim support systems (Robinson, 2010), while others criticise the inconsistent implementation of protective measures (Myhill, 2019). New safeguarding such as Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and orders (DAPOs) were introduced by recent changes, such as the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which recognised children as victims in abusive homes (Home Office, 2021). However, research indicates that there is an imbalance between law and practice, with implementation of these regulations differing greatly among forces and regions (HMICFRS, 2019). This study aims to close this gap and offer accurate perspectives from frontline police officers.

3.2 Research Strategy

Around 100 police officers from various departments and ranks within a single region police force will participate in a questionnaire survey as part of this study's quantitative methodology. Since it allows the collection of standardised data that can be statistically analysed to identify trends and general attitudes, quantitative research is suitable in this situation (Clark et al., 2021). Although qualitative methods, including interviews, provide depth, they are less effective for gaining a broad understanding and may introduce bias from the interviewer.

The decision to use police officers as the primary research population stems from their direct involvement in implementing domestic violence procedures. Understanding their perspectives will provide valuable insights into operational challenges, training adequacy, and perceived effectiveness of current policies. Officers will be asked about their training,

the frequency and nature of domestic abuse calls, tools available to them, and their views on procedural effectiveness.

Purposive sampling will be used in the study, with an emphasis on officers with previous knowledge handling domestic abuse cases. Given the objective of the study, this non-probability sampling strategy is suitable since it ensures that information is gathered from those who are most likely to offer relevant and educated answers (Research Methods for Business Students-Pearson Education (2019).pdf, 2022). While keeping the study reasonable, aiming for a sample size of about 100 officers will improve the findings' reliability.

Ethical considerations are paramount. Participation will be voluntary, responses anonymous, and data confidential. Ethical approval will be sought from the relevant institutional review board.

[3.3 Data Collection](#)

The questionnaire will consist of closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, enabling statistical analysis and comparison of trends across demographics (e.g. rank, years of service) Key Themes will include officer training and knowledge, effectiveness of current procedures, perceived barriers to intervention, impact of recent legislation and officer confidence and resource adequacy.

This design facilitates a quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode) and inferential methods such as chi-square tests to identify significant differences in responses across groups such as junior vs senior officers.

Although they will not be the main source of data, thematic analysis of brief qualitative responses to open-ended questions will be used when appropriate to capture nuanced perceptions; combining both approaches gives a more holistic perspective and enhances the validity of the study (Creswell and Creswell, 2023).

[3.4 Limitations and Potential Problems](#)

The research has limits even with careful planning. First, officers may overstate the effectiveness of procedures or under report organisational weaknesses if self-reported data

is used, which could lead to response bias. Studies considering institutional critique frequently encounter this limitation (Punch, 2005).

Second, while purposive sampling allows for targeted insight, it limits generalisability of findings of other forces or national contexts. Future studies might expand to include multiple forces or integrate victim perspectives for a broader evaluation.

Third, operational needs, time limits, or unwillingness to participate in research may limit access to participants. Collaboration with police officers and scheduling flexibility will be necessary to reduce this.

Lastly, the study's quantitative focus may overlook important contextual and emotional dynamics that qualitative study could uncover. A follow-up qualitative study could address this gap by exploring case studies or conducting officer interview.

Despite these limitations, the research remains a valuable contribution to understanding police responses to domestic violence and evaluating real world impact of legislative changes.

Chapter 4 - Analysis of Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an examination of the information gathered from a structured questionnaire given to 100 police officers, exploring the effectiveness of existing policing methods in addressing domestic violence. A quantitative approach was used, enabling the recognition of overarching trends and patterns within the sample population. This method was chosen because of the study's emphasis on quantifiable attitudes and experiences, as well as the requirement for generalisable data from frontline officers in a regional police department.

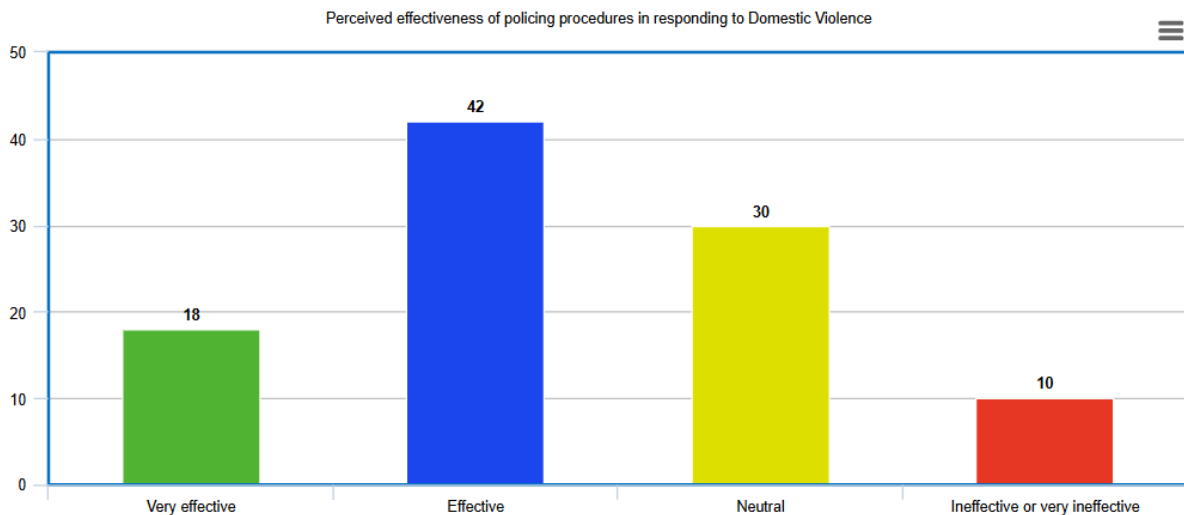
The aim of utilising a survey-based methodology was to evaluate not only procedural effectiveness but also officer confidence, adequacy of training, and the perceived impact of recent legislative modifications, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The systematic arrangement of the questionnaire enabled both descriptive and inferential analysis, laying the groundwork for the findings presented in this chapter.

4.2 Research objectives

Objective 1: To explore the perceived effectiveness of current policing procedures in responding to domestic violence.

Officers were asked to rate, on a scale of 1-5, their perception of the effectiveness of their force's domestic violence procedures:

- 18% rated procedures as "very effective" (5)
- 42% as "effective" (4)
- 30% as "neutral" (3)
- 10% as "ineffective" or "very ineffective" (1-2)



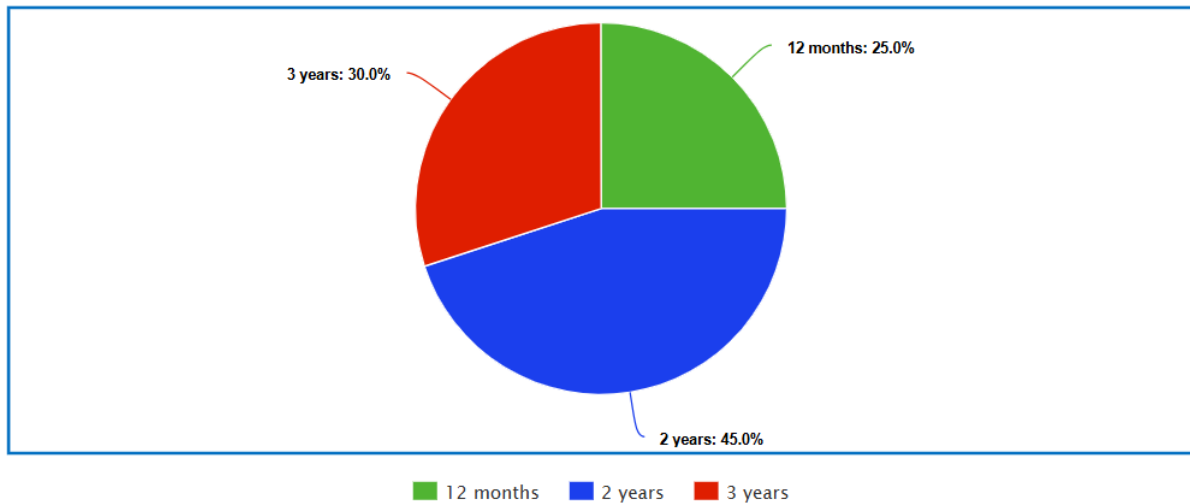
While most officers view procedures as at least “effective,” a substantial minority expressed only neutral or negative perceptions. This could reflect regional variation in resources, training, or the application or new tools available.

These findings align with research from HMICFRS (HMICFRS, 2019), which noted inconsistent application of domestic abuse policies across forces. While literature such as “Independent Sexual Violence Advisors” (Robinson, 2009) reported improvement in police responses over the past decade, results suggest progress remains uneven.

Objective 2: To examine the adequacy of training and preparation officers receive for domestic violence incidents.

From this research it was identified that

- 25% of respondents reported receiving specialist training within the last 12 months.
- 45% had received general refresher training within the past 2 years.
- 30% had not received any formal training on domestic abuse in the last 3 years.



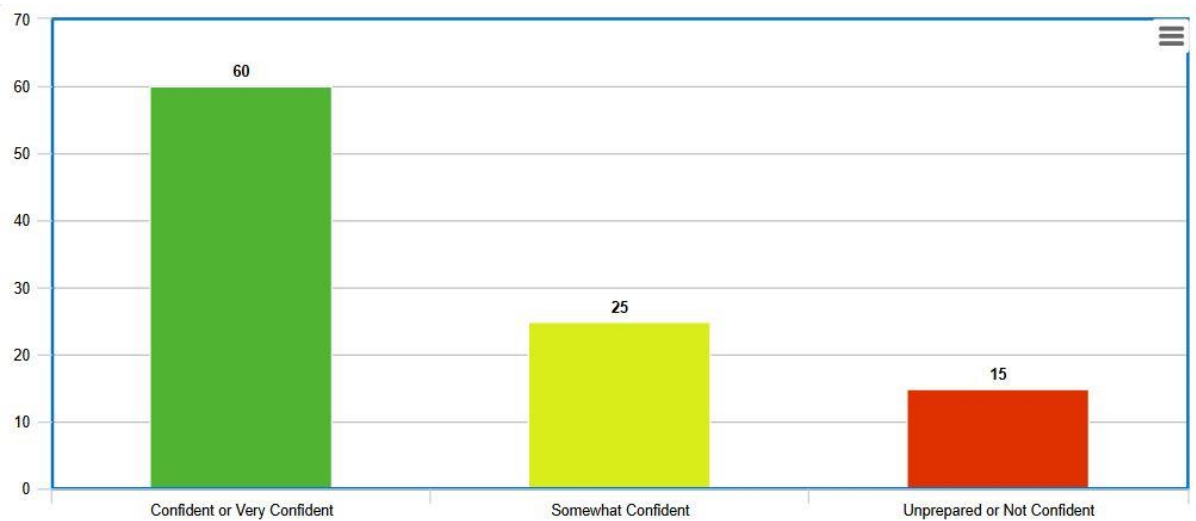
Training covered appears patchy. Officers who had recent training were more likely to rate procedures as effective, suggesting a correlation between preparedness and confidence in practice. Officers who had not received any recent training expressed greater uncertainty about risk assessment procedures.

This supports “The Golden Thread: Coercive Control and Risk Assessment for Domestic Violence” (Myhill and Hohl, 2016), who emphasised that frequent, specialised training significantly influences the quality of frontline response. The literature also points out gaps in training on coercive control, which several open-ended responses identified as an area of confusion.

Objective 3: To assess officer confidence and decision-making during domestic violence interventions.

When officers were asked on their level of confidence when responding to a domestic violence call:

- 60% indicated “confident” or “very confident”
- 25% were “somewhat confident”
- 15% admitted feeling “unprepared” or “not confident at all”



This research indicates that the majority of officers exhibit a sense of confidence; however, a troubling 15% express a lack of confidence, frequently attributing this to ambiguous protocols or inadequate resources.

Feedback has shown that night shifts and rural assignments often suffer from a deficiency in supervisory support, which consequently diminishes confidence levels.

These results illustrate the research conducted by Alan Bryman in "Social Research Methods" (Clark et al., 2021), which indicated that trust in procedural justice is linked to institutional backing and clarity of roles.

Furthermore, the existing literature emphasises that ambiguity may result in postponed interventions or lost opportunities for safeguarding, thereby confirming the apprehensions highlighted in this dataset.

Objective 4: To evaluate the perceived impact of recent legislation, including the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

When officers were asked on the impact of recent legislation:

- Only 35% felt "well-informed" about the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- 48% were "somewhat aware"
- 17% had "little or no knowledge" of its provisions
- When asked whether the Act had improved their capacity to protect victims, only 29% agreed, 41% were unsure, and 30% disagreed.

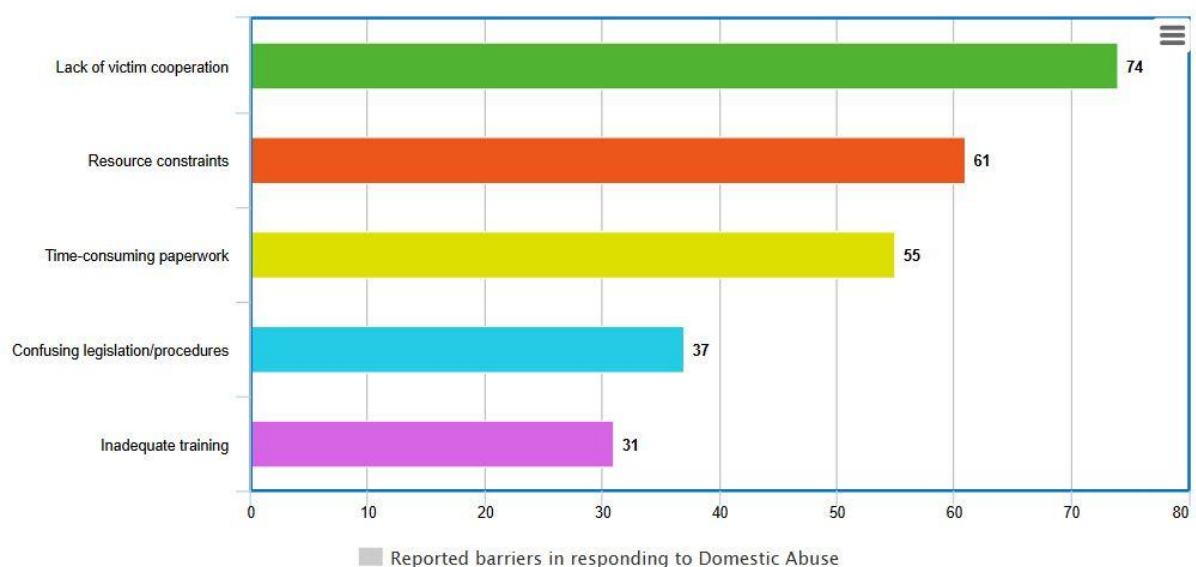
Despite the legislative significance of the Act, the understanding and execution at the operational level seem to be restricted. This gap in knowledge may seem confined. This deficiency in knowledge could be attributed to insufficient follow-up training or a lack of communication from management.

This stands in contrast to government reports (Home Office, 2021) that praised the Act as revolutionary. The disparity between the intentions of the policy and the actual experience on the ground reflects the issues highlighted in an "Introduction to Social Research" (Punch, 2005) regarding the delays in implementing policing reforms. Additional training and more effective communication of legislative context are necessary.

Objective 5: To identify key barriers police officers face when responding to domestic violence

Officers identified the following main barriers (multiple responses allowed):

- Lack of victim cooperation (74%)
- Resource constraints (61%)
- Time-consuming paperwork (55%)
- Confusing legislation/procedures (37%)
- Inadequate training (31%)



Victim cooperation remains the most cited barrier, often linked to fear, dependency, or trauma. Resource constraints were also highly prevalent, particularly in high-demand areas.

This evidence is supported by “Domestic violence perpetrator programmes: steps towards change” (Kelly and Westmarland, 2016). Interestingly, 37% highlighted legislative confusion, reinforcing earlier findings.

The literature has thoroughly documented these barriers. Robinson et al. (2016) recognized victim reluctance as a persistent issue, whereas the report "Police Response to Domestic Violence" (Hoyle and Sanders, 2000) highlighted the impact of inadequate resources on case results. This indicates that although policies may develop, fundamental barriers tend to stay relatively constant.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the empirical findings from a quantitative survey conducted with 100 police officers, in accordance with the research objectives. The primary results indicate that although a considerable number of officers perceive the existing domestic violence procedures as largely effective, notable challenges remain in aspects such as the sufficiency of training, confidence in intervention situations, awareness of legislation, and systemic obstacles including insufficient resources and victim cooperation.

Descriptively, a variability in the experiences and attitudes of officers has been identified. Analytically, correlations have been observed between training and procedural confidence, as well as between legislative awareness and perceived impact. Synthesising the findings with existing literature reveals that, although progress has been achieved, particularly in acknowledging the complexities of domestic abuse, gaps between legislation and its implementation at the frontline remain apparent.

The next chapter will expand on these findings by delivering a more thorough examination of the key themes, considering both empirical evidence and theoretical models. It will also explore wider implications for policing policies, training, and victim support. Ultimately, it will present suggestions for future practices and identify areas for additional research.

Chapter 5 - Findings and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to enhance comprehension of the efficacy of policing methods in addressing domestic violence. The research objectives were:

- To explore the perceived effectiveness of current policing procedures in responding to domestic violence.
- To examine the adequacy of training and preparation police officers receive for handling domestic violence incidents.
- To assess officer confidence and decision-making during domestic violence interventions.
- To evaluate the perceived impact of recent legislation, specifically the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- To identify key barriers that police officers face in responding to domestic violence incidents.

This final chapter will review each research objective, summarise the main findings from both the literature and empirical research, and highlight the key conclusions reached. In conclusion, the chapter will offer a series of recommendations derived from the insights gained during the study, aimed at guiding future policy, practice, and research.

5.2 Research Objectives – Summary of findings and Conclusions

Research objective 1: To explore the perceived effectiveness of current policing procedures in responding to domestic violence

Survey data indicated that 60% of participants considered domestic violence procedures to be "effective" or "very effective," while 40% expressed neutral or negative opinions.

Officers pointed out discrepancies in the application of these procedures and noted that their effectiveness often relied on the officers' experience and the resources available during the incident.

The results imply that although there is overall confidence in the structural framework of domestic violence procedures, the actual implementation is inconsistent. This aligns with existing concerns in the literature (HMICFRS, 2019), which highlight the variability in application among different forces and the necessity for improved standardization in practice.

Research objective 2: To examine the adequacy of training and preparation police officers receive

Only 25% of officers received specialised domestic abuse training in the past year, while 30% had no training in the last three years. Officers who underwent recent training rated procedures more positively and showed increased confidence in managing incidents.

Training is a vital element in preparing officers to effectively address domestic abuse. The findings align with previous literature from (Robinson, 2009) and (Myhill and Hohl, 2016), indicating that training is not only inconsistent but also crucial for enhancing officer skills and building trust with victims. There is a significant need for regular, mandatory, and current training that focuses on complex abuse types such as coercive control.

Research objective 3: To assess officer confidence and decision-making during domestic violence interventions

While 60% of officers indicated they felt assured in handling domestic violence cases, 15% expressed low confidence, pointing to a lack of support or ambiguous procedural instructions, especially during night shifts or in high-pressure scenarios.

Confidence is strongly linked to training, resource availability, and the clarity of protocols. These results align with the findings of (Clark et al., 2021), who emphasised that confidence in policing practices is influenced by both structural and cultural elements within the department. The data indicates a need to enhance support systems, particularly during critical periods, to promote consistent and assured decision-making.

Research objective 4: To evaluate the perceived impact of the Domestic Violence Act 2021

Only 35% of officers felt adequately informed about the Act. Less than one-third believed it had greatly enhanced their ability to protect victims, and a significant number were either

uncertain or uninformed about the tools provided by the legislation (e.g. DAPNs and DAPOs).

There is a noticeable disconnect between legislative reform and its implementation on the ground. These points (Punch, 2005) raise concerns about policy delays and emphasise the necessity for improved communication and training regarding new legal frameworks. The research concludes that for legislative changes to be effective, they must be accompanied by practical training and operational guidance.

Objective 5: To identify the key barriers police officers face in responding to domestic violence

The primary obstacles identified were a lack of cooperation from victims (74%), inadequate resources (61%), excessive paperwork (55%), and unclear procedures (37%). Officers also expressed worries regarding the follow-up actions from partner agencies and the criminal justice system.

Systematic issues continue to exist despite advancements in policing. These obstacles, many of which have been highlighted in literature over the past few decades (Robinson, 2009) and (Hoyle and Sanders, 2000), suggest that enhancements in procedural documentation need to be complemented by tangible investments in resources and collaboration among multiple agencies.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of this research support several key recommendations for improving the effectiveness of policing procedures in domestic violence cases.

1. Standardised and Mandatory Domestic Abuse Training

Training must be compulsory across all forces. It should include not just legal updates but also practical situations related to coercive control, risk assessment, and trauma-informed responses. Annual refreshers need to be established as a standard practice.

2. Improved Communication of Legislation

The implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 should be accompanied by clear internal communications, training programs, and practical guidance. Officers require brief, easy-to-understand summaries on how to use the new legal tools in real-life scenarios.

3. Investment in Support and Resources

The issues of understaffing and the absence of dedicated domestic violence units continue to be a significant problem. Police forces should think about redistributing resources or forming specialised teams to handle high-risk situations, particularly during off-peak times when support is limited.

4. Victim Engagement and Community Outreach

Due to the significant number of officers indicating low victim cooperation, it is essential to work on rebuilding trust. This involves training officers in communication that focuses on the victim and strengthening collaborations with local support organisations to improve early intervention.

5. Ongoing Monitoring and Feedback Mechanisms

Forces need to implement feedback systems (such as internal audits, victim follow-ups, and officer surveys) to consistently assess the effectiveness of their procedures. This information can be utilised to adjust training, reallocation of resources, and refresh practices in a flexible manner.

6. Multi-agency Collaboration

Barriers to effective response often involve poor coordination with health and social services, and the legal system. Local authorities should develop clearer frameworks for joint working, data sharing, and responsibility tracking to ensure continuity of care and support for victims.

5.4 Final Thoughts

This study has demonstrated that although policing methods for domestic violence have improved in certain respects, numerous challenges persist. Specifically, there is a

considerable necessity to close the divide between legislation and implementation, guarantee informative training, and tackle systemic resource challenges.

The subsequent phase of this research may entail a qualitative follow-up investigation to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of both officers and victims. This could aid in contextualising the results presented here and provide more comprehensive insights into how procedures can be enhanced in both policy and practice.

By integrating training, enhancing communication, and fostering collaboration, responses to domestic violence within policing can become more effective, consistent, and centred on the victim. Addressing these concerns is not merely an issue of operational efficiency, but also a matter of justice and safety for some of the most vulnerable individuals in society.

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