

This essay will aim to critically assess the challenges which were associated with a domestic abuse incident which I have previously attended whilst being based as a response officer. I will consider different strategies which I have used whilst dealing with domestic encounters and how they have been effective when dealing with such challenging situations. I will discuss policing models such as the National Decision-Making model which is an important aid to officers when trying to navigate their way through difficult situations.

In recent months, my colleague and I attended an incident which was domestic related. This incident involved a mother and her son. A family member had called the Police after attending the address of the female and discovered that she had quite severe bruising to her face after coming home from a family related funeral. The female had disclosed that family member that she had been assaulted by her son after coming home from the funeral. The family stated that this tends to be a regular occurrence but, the female always refuses to have any Police involvement due to the fact that her son is the aggressor. According to the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, domestic abuse is “very rarely a one-off offence” which indicates to us as officers that this might not be the first time the female has fallen a victim to her son (Nicole Jacobs, 2024).

Upon our initial attendance at the female’s address, she had bruising to her face as described in the initial call and there were signs that there had been a disturbance in the kitchen of the property. There was crockery which appeared to have been smashed, on the floor as well as damage to the TV. When trying to negate what had happened at the property, the female was very evasive. Her demeanour suggested that she might be afraid of someone/something. This made it hard for us as officers to try and investigate the matter efficiently. It is the responsibility of the police to respond effectively to reports of domestic violence. In most cases, this entails taking the offender into custody if there are sufficient reasons to do so and it is a reasonable course of action (). Officers must always take positive action when attending domestic incidents. Due to the third-party report, and due to the fact that the female was displaying visible injuries, and due to the damage, that had been caused within the property, she conducted arrest enquiries for her son who had left to go and stay with an elderly relative.

We attended the elderly relative’s address whereby they were asked if the male was present. The elderly male who answered the door stated that he was not. But, this was not the case. The male could be seen by officers through the living room window and so was asked to make himself known to us so that we could explain the reason as to why we were at the property. The male was then arrested for Domestic Related Common Assault and Criminal Damage.

After the male had been arrested, this information was then relayed back to the victim whereby she broke down and cried. She stated words to the effect of, “HIS ARREST HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING, I FEEL RELIEVED”. This was a relief to hear as an officer at this moment in time due to her not being willing to provide us with much information regarding the incident prior to his arrest.

When dealing with this incident, my colleague and I discussed the policing model known as – The National Decision Model. When reflecting on how we dealt with the incident, it was important for us to try and build a rapport with the victim. This was challenging as previously mentioned, she was not willing to provide us with much detail about the incident. She was very hostile but, we kept in mind that this is not personal and the emotions she was experiencing at the moment were very hard for her. We then gathered information about the incident from a third party. Due to the information that was presented to us, and due to the facial bruising and damage, it was clear that an incident had taken place at the address, despite the victim not telling us much about it. We then assessed the risk by looking at the aggressor’s warning markers and previous convictions. This allowed us to then

come up with a working strategy. Our powers were discussed as well as policies which was evident in the decision that we ended up making. Arrests must be appropriate, legal, and required in order to provide the victim with breathing room, time to seek more investigation, and reassurance that they are being taken seriously (College of Policing, 2024). We considered the possibility of giving the aggressor a Domestic Violence Protection Notice or advising a civil order however, these were not applicable due to what we were presented with at the time. We then took action, by arresting the aggressor.

Domestic incidents as well as other incidents, tend to come with many challenges. In this case, the mother being evasive from Police due to the aggressor being her son, proved difficult when trying to obtain details from her regarding the incident. According to the Crime Survey of England it is estimated that in the year ending in March 2017, 1.9 million adults aged 16 to 59 suffered domestic violence (The Crime Survey of England and Wales, 2017). Furthermore, 1.2 million women and 713,000 men were reported to have been victims of domestic abuse. Women were also more likely than males to report having suffered such abuse. In this case, the female has not been the one to make the initial report. Due to her willingness to not engage with us whilst we were at the address, this made it difficult to complete simple tasks such as completing DASH questions with her. When referring to DASH, these are questions used as a tool to identify the risk of the victim. The female answered very few of these questions which presented as a challenge as we were not able to effectively, identify her level of risk.

A further challenge which the Police are presented with when trying to deal with Domestic Abuse incidents is that members of the public don't have confidence in the Police. In 2020, The BBC published a report stating that "Victims are no longer reporting some crimes to police because so many offenders are never brought to justice" (BBC News, 2020). The public believe that their incidents are not being dealt with appropriately as the workload which officers have appears to be more pressing. People's chances of getting justice is a lottery based on their postcode due to variations in how police departments conduct investigations, increased demand, and declining resources in certain areas. 7.8% of offences resulted in a suspect being charged, according to Her Majesty's inspector of constabulary, a decrease from 9.1% the year before (BBC News, 2020). According to the CSEW, between 2017–18 and 2021/22, fewer individuals believed that the police were performing a "good" or "excellent" job—a decrease from 62% to 52%—and there was a decline in public trust in local law enforcement from 78% to 69% (CSEW, 2017).

In some cases, if victims of domestic abuse fail to engage with officers, this might result in the failure of being able to identify and respond to their vulnerabilities. This not only fails the victim, but it also creates a cost for government services as this wasn't picked up, there and then (College of Policing, 2024). A miscarriage of justice may occur from the inadequate treatment of victims, witnesses, and vulnerable offenders. Expenses can reduce public confidence in law enforcement and limit their ability to jointly maintain peace.

Police forces have noticed the above challenge and have taken steps towards trying to increase trust within the services in which officers provide to the public. One way in which the Police have tried to restore the confidence in Police is by focusing on 'Community Policing'. This includes increasing the frequency and visibility of police patrols, initiatives for involving the community and concentrating on local problems. The goal of the 2005 countrywide implementation of the Neighbourhood Policing Programme in England and Wales was to establish a visible police presence to interact with communities and address issues through neighbourhood problem resolution. Neighbourhood policing was drastically reduced as a result of police budget cuts made in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis.

In England and Wales, there were 51,288 prosecutions connected to domestic abuse for the year that ended in March 2023, down from 53,207 for the year that ended in March 2022 (Office of National Statistics, 2023). In order to reduce domestic abuse offending, a multi-agency strategy called 'MATAC' has been adapted. This technique aims to decrease crime while improving victim safety, altering the habits of offenders, and encouraging partner engagement. The goal is to lessen the rate of reoccurring incidents and the harm inflicted on domestic abuse victims. A decrease in scores on the recency, frequency, gravity, and victim's analytical spreadsheet supports the efficiency of this strategy (College of Policing, 2024). There are various interventions which can be provided to victims via MATAC such as support, prevention, diversion, disruption, and enforcement (College of Policing, 2024). Statistics have shown that the MATAC strategy has been having an impact in being able to reduce reoffending. In total, 206 nominals had a lesser MATAC score when they were adopted than when they were archived (College of Policing, 2024).

When responding to Domestic Abuse incidents, the primary focus of an officer should be to safeguard the victim. This could be by removing the aggressor from the property or advising them to leave the address/area. Another way in which the victim can be safeguarded there and then can be to make an arrest for an offence or arrest the aggressor for breach of the peace. This gives the aggressor and the victim some time apart to cool down and this shows that officers have been able to protect the victim, if they think that they might be in a vulnerable situation (Office of the Public Guardian, 2015). Once officers can ensure that the victim is safe and well at scene, it is important to then carry out the relevant paperwork afterwards. Upon returning to the station, officers will most likely complete a Domestic Violence Abuse Public Protection Notice. This notice will outline any safeguarding concerns that officers might have for the victim. This will then alert the relevant agencies e.g IDVA, MARAC, Social Services...In addition to this, if necessary, officers can also apply to put a warning marker on the victim's address should the perpetrator return to the property. If a domestic abuse aggressor is arrested and there are outstanding enquiries regarding this investigation, the aggressor might then be bailed. As well as the offender being given bail, they might also be given conditions. These will most often include...not to contact the victim indirectly or directly, not to attend the victim's address etc. This is to try and safeguard the victim as much as possible.

To conclude this essay, many challenges associated with domestic abuse incidents have been identified and considered. Many people who experience domestic abuse—whether in close relationships or within the family—may not always be aware that their treatment is harmful. Those who have suffered for a long time will have to make tough choices that could have a big influence on their life and the lives of people close to them. Because of this, some complainants can be reluctant to engage with the criminal justice system. Encouraging prolonged prosecution involvement, getting protection orders when necessary, and enhancing the safety of victims and their children are all critical to restoring victims' and families' faith in the criminal justice system and lowering the likelihood that they will commit crimes again. Perhaps to ensure that victims vulnerabilities are identified appropriately and efficiently, more training needs to be given to officers regarding dealing with domestic abuse incidents. In order to do this, we will need to collaborate closely with law enforcement and specialised non-governmental organisations to guarantee that victims are provided with accurate and consistent information, and that they feel heard and supported (CPS, 2022).

Word Count: 2050

