

PROCEDURE – Domestic Abuse Involving Police Personnel

Number: B 1703

Date Published: 22 July 2021

Version 6 – July 2021

1.0 Summary of Changes

This procedure has been amended on its yearly review as follows:

- Section 2 - The code of ethics and link to information documented on the College of Policing site has been added;
- Section 3.1 - A link has been added taking officers to a new procedure D 0507 covering restrictions of incidents;
- Section 3.5 has a new paragraph added regarding guidance issued to ensure all investigative and safeguarding tasks passed between Commands, Departments and Teams are made subject to Athena Tasks. Emails are no longer accepted as any form of correspondence in connection to an investigation;
- New section 3.9 added to include reference to the new DA Hub which features a section on DA involving police personnel;
- Section 5 - An additional comment inserted regarding respecting privacy but taking into account safety of victims;
- Section 9 - Author details updated.

2.0 What this Procedure is about

This procedure details the specific responsibilities to be undertaken by Essex Police officers and staff when responding to domestic abuse incidents involving individuals who are serving members of Essex Police.

It applies to all police personnel irrespective of rank, position, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on:

- Domestic Abuse;
- Leadership, strategic oversight and management – Management of Personnel;
- National Decision Model (NDM);
- Risk Principles;
- Code of Ethics.

The APP provides guidance on 'Specific management considerations when dealing with police perpetrators of domestic abuse'.

The Domestic Abuse Workplace Toolkit has been developed to provide information on how to support officers and staff who may be victims of domestic abuse. The document contains information to help managers understand domestic abuse and the impact it has in the workplace. It also provides practical advice and information for staff who may be victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse.

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Essex Police recognises that within its organisation there may be employees who are experiencing, have experienced or are potential perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Essex Police Staff may be exposed to trauma that has an impact on their personal relationships. Victims in a relationship with someone in these services may be concerned that they will not be believed.

Staff and officers, both victims and perpetrators, may feel uncomfortable about seeking help and advice from their colleagues. They may feel concerned about the implications of people being aware of their personal issues (particularly around seeking early help if they are a perpetrator) and believe that as they work for the police they should know what to do. They may not recognise the behaviour as abusive or controlling.

The **Code of Ethics** has been produced by the College of Policing in its role as the professional body for policing. It sets and defines the exemplary standards of behaviour for everyone who works in policing.

Forces could consider establishing mutual arrangements with another force for the provision of anonymous help and information in cases involving police personnel.

It is appreciated incidents of domestic abuse may be complex in nature, perhaps even more so where one or more parties involved is a member of police personnel. Police officers attending such incidents must deal with them in a professional manner whilst maintaining the highest standards of integrity.

Compliance with this procedure and any governing policy is mandatory.

3.0 Detail the Procedure

3.1 Command and Control - STORM

Call handlers working within the Force Control Room (FCR) will notify the FCR Inspector should an incident be reported involving Essex Police personnel. The Inspector will determine if the incident and associated communication should be restricted. This will include radio communications should one or both of the involved parties be in the workplace. There is a new procedure designed to guide the decision making around when and why to restrict access to a STORM incident D 0507.

Particular attention will be paid to the location of the perpetrator, their duty status and the nature of their role, as this may allow the perpetrator early access to information that would not otherwise be available. A police officer may also have access to weapons and vehicles which would not be available to the general public and this should be considered as part of any risk assessment.

The FCR Inspector will arrange for the staff member's Line Management to be notified.

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If the suspect or victim are officers or staff, the Command Team should be informed, as safeguarding may involve the workplace, for example, if they work together. The Command Team would need to be appraised to ensure Welfare Provision from each side. Consideration should also be given at an early stage to staff association representation.

3.2 Initial Officer Attending Responsibilities

All domestic abuse incidents will be attended and dealt with in accordance with B 1701 Procedure - Domestic Abuse Initial Grading and Attendance. Positive action will be taken irrespective of whether the individuals concerned are employed by Essex Police.

These incidents should be dealt with as they would if the incident did not involve an employee of Essex Police. There should be no change in behaviour by the attending or investigating officers, including not influencing any party involved to provide evidence or not, nor to influence any change with normal procedure.

Investigations will be managed in accordance with B 1702 Procedure – Domestic Abuse Investigations.

3.3 Arrests

If an individual who is arrested is an Essex Police employee then they must be taken to a custody suite outside of the LPA in which they work, consideration should be given to the utilisation of a custody suite outside of the Force area.

If the suspect has committed an offence and remains outstanding, then they will be placed on PNC as wanted in line with normal operating procedures.

3.4 Inter-Force Arrangements

Where the case involves a suspect, who is a police officer from a different police force area, the nominated Line Manager from the Force receiving the report is responsible for:

- Providing a report to the nominated Line Manager in the force which employs the suspect;
- Ensuring that the Professional Standards Department in the employer force are notified and regularly updated about the investigation and any prosecution process.

3.5 Supervisor Actions - Investigation

- Review the incident and Athena investigation as per DASH Training and Guidelines set out in B 1701 Procedure - Domestic Abuse Initial Grading and Attendance;

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- In cases where the **perpetrator** is a serving police staff member – notify the individuals Line Manager and command team representative;
- In cases where the **victim** is a serving police staff member – notify the individuals Line Manager and command team representative;
- The Inspector responsible for the relevant geographical area will be required to appoint an appropriate investigative asset. This will be provided from the Domestic Abuse Investigation Team (DAIT). Consideration should be given to the suitability of the investigator in terms of established professional relationships;
- If either party are serving police personnel, liaise with the CRU DI to ensure a suitable member of staff is assigned to manage safeguarding of the victim and their family;
- Notify the Professional Standards Department (PSD);
- Consider early liaison with the Press Office in serious cases, if appropriate, to allow preparation for media enquiries.

Guidance has been issued to ensure that all investigative and safeguarding tasks passed between Commands, Departments and Teams are made subject to Athena Tasks. Emails are no longer accepted as any form of correspondence in connection to an investigation

3.6 Investigations

All investigations involving serving police personnel will be conducted by members of DAIT unless the case is of exceptional severity. Police officers who commit domestic abuse related offences should not be treated differently to any other suspect. They should be investigated and held accountable through the criminal justice system in the same way as any other person.

3.7 Confidentiality

Essex Police will take action to ensure confidentiality as far as possible. Every effort should be made to ensure that information relating to the investigation is restricted to those that are involved in the case, dependant on the level of risk to the victim and family.

Any special provisions relating to access of records should ensure that this is not limited in a way which jeopardises the protection of the victim, children or any other person. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring the privacy of victims but this should be proportionate and balanced against the duty to protect them from further harm and is to be decided on a case by case basis.

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3.8 Victims

Victims who are police employees will be supported in the same way as members of the public. Supervisors should give consideration to referring the individual to Occupational Health and involving the Human Resources Department (HR) at an early stage. HR should have a greater understanding of the effect that domestic abuse can have in the workplace and they should ensure that all employees feel supported and empowered by their workplace to deal with domestic abuse. Thought will also need to be given to future working arrangements should both victim and perpetrator be police employees. Further information is available for police personnel in the Domestic Abuse Workplace Toolkit.

Essex Police should ensure that the victims of offenders who are employed by Essex Police, including victims who are police officers or police staff, are given the same level of service as other victims of domestic abuse. They should be offered confidential support from both internal and external sources. They should have access to the same level of police support.

Police officers may also be victims of non-police perpetrators of domestic abuse. Essex Police have the same obligations as any other employer to support their employee and safeguard them and their colleagues.

Essex Police should also ensure that such victims are given a full explanation of this workplace procedure and are kept fully informed about the progress of internal investigations and misconduct processes. Police personnel providing such information should be of an appropriate rank and appropriately skilled and trained. Consideration should be given to Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Officer or Child Abuse Investigation officer and/or family liaison officers assisting a senior-ranking officer in providing such information and support.

3.9 DA Knowledge Hub

Officers and staff should be aware of the contents of the DA Knowledge Hub. This in conjunction with this procedure provides further information advice and support for all parties in these circumstances.

4.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- EIA – February 2021

5.0 Risk Assessment

Officers and members of police staff required to attend a domestic abuse incident will be required to conduct a dynamic risk assessment based on the specific circumstances of the incident they are attending.

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There are a number of control measures embedded within this procedure which will identify risk factors associated with initial attendance. All officers and members of staff are required to fully familiarise themselves with the content of this document and must ensure that, where appropriate, these control measures are carried out prior to attendance.

Whilst Essex Police respects the rights and privacy of all victims of abuse, it has obligations to safeguard such persons from foreseeable risk.

Dealing with domestic abuse can be demanding and stressful. Forces should provide specialists with adequate support, e.g., time to progress workloads, regular breaks, extra support if dealing with high workloads, to enable them to carry out their duties and ensure the welfare, health and safety of individual staff members.

In recognition of the distressing nature of domestic abuse cases, supervisors and managers have an obligation to monitor an individual's workload and should regularly conduct reviews on a one-to-one basis making referrals to Occupational Health & Welfare Services where necessary. Managers should consider implementing mandatory or voluntary counselling and welfare support for domestic abuse specialists.

6.0 Consultation

The following have been consulted during the formulation of this document:

- Unison
- Police Federation
- Essex Diversity and Inclusion Manager
- Health & Safety
- Strategic Change Team
- PSD Superintendent
- Policy/Risk
- Superintendents Association
- Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar
- Information Management
- Head of Health & Wellbeing
- HR
- LPA D/Chief Inspectors
- Operations Centre D/Chief Inspector
- Domestic Abuse Governance Board
- Force Lead for Domestic Abuse

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- Support Networks
 - Catholic Police Guild
 - Christian Police Association
 - Disability Network
 - Menopause Support Group
 - Minority & Ethnic Support Association (MESA)
 - LGBT Network
 - Women's Leadership & Development Forum
 - Work-life Balance Network

7.0 Monitoring and Review

This procedure will be monitored and reviewed by, or on behalf of, the Force Lead for Domestic Abuse every 12 months to ensure that it remains compliant with current legislation and provides an effective response to domestic incidents involving serving staff personnel.

8.0 Governing Force policy. Related Force policies or related procedures

- B 1700 Policy – Domestic Abuse
- B 1701 Procedure – Domestic Abuse Initial Grading and Attendance
- B 1702 Procedure – Domestic Abuse Investigations
- B 1704 Procedure – Role of the Central Referral Unit (CRU - PP)
- B 1706 Procedure – Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders

8.1 Data Security

Essex Police have measures in place to protect the security of your data in accordance with our Information Management Policy – W 1000 Policy – Information Management.

8.2 Retention & Disposal of Records

Essex Police will hold data in accordance with our Records Review, Retention & Disposal Policy – W 1012 Procedure/SOP - Records Review, Retention and Disposal.

We will only hold data for as long as necessary for the purposes for which we collected. Victims/public should be reminded that Essex Police take the protection of personal data seriously as described in the privacy notice <https://www.essex.police.uk/hyg/fpnessex/privacy-notice/>.

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9.0 Other source documents, e.g. legislation, Authorised Professional Practice (APP), Force forms, partnership agreements (if applicable)

- College of Policing - Code of Ethics
- College of Policing - National Decision Model
- College of policing - Authorised Professional Practice (APP)
- Domestic Abuse Workplace Toolkit
- EIA – February 2021
- DA Knowledge Hub

Procedure Author:

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Procedure Owner:

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