

Understanding domestic abuse - Pathways to Impact

Our pathway to impact is built upon the strong existing relationships we have with West Midlands Police (WMP), and the College of Policing (CoP). These existing relationships are complemented by our membership of the University of Warwick's Centre for Operational Policing Research (COPR), which provides access to an even wider established network within UK policing. Our model for impact is to have a senior-level sponsor and a day-to-day contact with each organisation we work with. Impact is only delivered by understanding the policy and operational concerns of each organisation and translating the research into direct actions within the organisation.

The research proposed here has been developed with direct input from officers and experts within WMP. This has allowed us to design the research questions that are relevant to current issues within the WMP, and that can feed in to existing structures to accelerate the dissemination of findings, and contribute to changes in policy. To facilitate this, we have a day-to-day contact at WMP with Inspector Jenny Richards (Evidence Based Practice in Risk and Organisational Learning), and Alison Spence (Crime Commissioner's Office). As a result of this close collaboration, we have received support from senior levels within WMP including from Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe, who is the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for domestic abuse.

These relationships will enable us to work with WMP to import insights generated from our the research into their senior management team and ultimately to influence policy and day-to-day operations. This will be possible for each of the objectives and topics within our proposal:

1. The programme on "predictors of serious harm" will inform refinement of the THRIVE+ (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability, engagement, prevention and intervention) risk assessment model used for assessing calls and reports of domestic abuse. It will also provide a more general evidence base to help police develop policy.

2. The programme on the "decision to report" links with police's design of the initial contact with victims (e.g., <https://west-midlands.police.uk/your-options/domestic-abuse>). It will also help the police to develop more efficient and targeted intervention and awareness campaigns.

3. The programme on "police mis-recording of abuse", is of direct interest to their data quality and reporting, as well as identifying any potential shortcomings in the way they deal with reports from particular types of victims. It is of particular importance to victims, as mis-reporting can result in them being directed to the wrong support systems, which are not appropriate for their needs.

4. The programme on "environmental factors influencing abuse" can be used to help predict which local populations are most at risk of abuse in the West Midlands. It can also give clues as to likely triggering events, such as economic shocks, or changes to benefits, and large events such as sports championships.

In addition to working with WMP, our links to the National Police Chiefs council, and collaboration with the CoP, provide pathways for impact across all forces. Our work will contribute to the ongoing refinement of the Authorised Professional Practice framework in the context of domestic abuse. This framework is the primary guidance for police response strategy, therefore it has real impact on policing practices and victims' experiences. Insights from our work on the predictors of serious harm will contribute to the revision of the existing DASH risk assessment tool for domestic abuse. Almond, Mcmanus, Brian, and Merrington (2017) have shown that the DASH framework has poor predictive performance, as only 4 out of 25 risk factors were associated with an increased risk of repeat perpetration. We will work initially with David Tucker, Head Crime and Criminal Justice at the CoP.

We will meet regularly with our contacts at WMP and the CoP throughout the grant. This will enable us to adapt to current questions that arise during the period of the proposal. It also allows us to react quickly to any unanticipated issues that arise as a result of our findings, such as following up on unexpected results to identify underlying causes. It also ensures that there is an ongoing dialogue about the data being used, and provides an opportunity to alert the police to any data quality issues.

We will contact, in the first three months of project, domestic abuse charities including Women's Aid, Refuge, Safe Lives, and National Centre for Domestic Abuse, and visit them at their offices to present the programme of research and involve them as we conduct the initial analysis. We will then follow up with these organisations at the end of the grant to present our overall conclusions and discuss how these can be most useful to the organisations' aims.

In the second year of the proposal, we will hold a 1-day impact summit at Warwick Business School's London Shard venue, and subsequently publish a summary including policy briefing notes. This will be funded by the Warwick Business School Impact Fund. We will host the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Domestic Abuse, Deputy Chief Constable Louisa Rolfe (who is also at WMP), and Members of Parliament from the Home Affairs Committee domestic abuse inquiry, and key contacts from the third sector agencies. The summit will be a 50/50 academic and practitioner mix. Although a high-profile dissemination event at the Shard will attract attention, it is the continuous week-on-week contact with our impact partners that we think will deliver the legacy impact for this project.

In addition to the academic journal outputs, we will present the findings in a series of thought leadership pieces for dissemination across the police and third-sector contacts. We will submit these reports to the CoP What Works database and log them on the Research Map. These thought leadership pieces, as well as our other impact pathways will allow us to feed our results into the next Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy. The current strategy covers 2016 - 2020 (Home Office, 2016), meaning we will be well placed to feed our results into the early stages of the subsequent strategy update. A primary goal of the 2016 - 2020 strategy is to identify victims at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent violence and abuse from escalating. Our results will be directly applicable to measuring success on this goal, and providing future direction.

Within Lloyds Bank, we will work with Martin King, Head of Customer Vulnerability. Warwick already has a relationship with King's team in CI Stewart's work on the effects of gambling, which was completed using micro-level transaction data from millions of account holders. Key issues here are work on coercion and control, and understanding the extent to which financial resilience affects the decision to contact the police and escape the cycle of abuse. Our day-to-day contact at Lloyds is Dr David Leake, Head of the Behavioural Insights Team. We will present the findings from all four programmes to the Lloyds Vulnerability Team in six-monthly briefings, and work to integrate insight from the research into the Lloyds environment.

PI Mullett will spend half of his time on the project leading the impact activity and takes overall responsibility of delivering the impact programme. Mullett has worked extensively on the impact programme from the ESRC funded "Accumulating to Choose" programme, with the Financial Conduct Authority. CI Stewart will also spend half of his time of the project on the impact activity. Stewart has significant experience of impact activities in the domain of financial decision making with Lloyds Banking Group, Barclays Bank, and the UK Finance Association. Postdoc Trendl will be fully involved in the impact programme. This is an important part of the professional development for an early career researcher, and will allow her to establish a network of independent contacts.

Warwick Business School's commitment of a 4 year PhD studentship to run beyond the end of the current project will allow us to continue impact activities into the future. To further support this impact activity beyond the end date of the current grant we will also utilize the Warwick Business School Impact Fund, and apply for funds from other sources. Future work will allow us to direct research questions towards the areas identified in this project, and in collaboration with our impact partners.

References

- Almond, L., Mcmanus, M. A., Brian, D. J., & Merrington, D. (2017). Exploration of the risk factors contained within the UK's existing domestic abuse risk assessment tool (DASH): do these risk factors have individual predictive validity regarding recidivism? *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 9(1).
- Home Office. (2016). *Strategy to end violence against women and girls: 2016 to 2020* (Tech. Rep.). Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/strategy-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-2016-to-2020>