

IOPC Learning Recommendation Made Under Paragraph 28A of Schedule 3 to the Police Reform Act 2002.

Our Reference: IX/1044/22 and PC/1739/23

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In May 2022, Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) officers visited a house following a report of a domestic disturbance. The husband and wife couple who lived there were spoken to separately and their accounts were recorded, but no further action was taken.

Nine days later the woman was fatally stabbed at the house, with her husband claiming responsibility in a 999 call.

The man was arrested and in April 2023 he was convicted of his wife's murder.

The MPS referred this case to the IOPC and they started an independent investigation which was primarily focused on the police visit to the house regarding the domestic disturbance.

During their investigation, investigators examined evidence including a recording of the call received by MPS reporting the domestic disturbance, police radio communications, the officers' body-worn video footage, the officer's training records, and relevant police policy and procedures. The IOPC also obtained witness accounts from the key police witnesses.

Their investigation concluded in May 2023.

During the investigation, there was no indication any police officer had behaved in a manner that would justify the bringing of disciplinary proceedings or had committed a criminal offence.

IOPC Recommendation 1

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS):

(a) updates the 'Anonymous Caller' guidance in the document, 'Learning plan for Metropolitan Police Contact Centre (Met CC) Academy', to highlight that although callers are entitled to remain anonymous, this is not something that should be offered up front by the operator, but used only if expressly requested by the caller. This is based on the information provided by the Deputy Head of the Met CC Academy, who has confirmed that recruits are advised of this.

(b) ensures all Contact Centre staff are made aware of the updated guidance, once it is in place.

This follows an IOPC investigation where the 'call taker,' recording a report of a domestic abuse incident in progress, asked the caller if they wished to remain anonymous, to which they responded that they did. At no point prior to this, did the caller give any indication they wished to remain anonymous. No further contact was made with the caller by the investigating officers and an opportunity to gather further information to assist with the investigation and inform safeguarding considerations was missed. One of the attending officers stated that, in part, no contact was made because they were informed the caller wanted to remain anonymous.

In respect of 'Anonymous Caller' guidance, currently the MetCC 'Learning plan' states, '*callers may remain anonymous.*' No other information is provided. The deputy head of the MetCC Academy has stated, "*although callers are entitled to remain anonymous, this is not something that should be offered upfront by the operator, but used only if expressly requested by the caller.*" The MetCC 'Learning plan' does not reflect this.

The IOPC believe that implementing this recommendation will ensure MetCC training staff will impart the anonymous caller instructions consistently to students. Additionally, the amended MetCC 'Learning plan' will be a reference guide for all MetCC staff when guidance is sought on this topic.

MPS Response

The Metropolitan Police Service ("MPS") has reviewed and accepts the recommendation by the IOPC.

'Anonymous Caller' guidance is now included in our 'Learning Plan' for the MetCC. Training content has been updated to emphasise the importance of obtaining minimum data standards. The updated guidance makes it clear that while callers are entitled to remain anonymous, this option should not be offered upfront by the operator and should only be utilised if expressly requested by the caller.

The updated training content will be delivered to the next intake of new recruits starting on 3rd June 2024. Additionally, we will ensure that those recruits who joined in March and April 2024 receive this updated guidance through briefings conducted by their coaching leads. Existing staff will be made aware through a direct communication and an input on their professional development (CPD) days.

We are committed to ensuring all Contact Centre staff are fully aware of and adhere to these updated guidelines.

IOPC Recommendation 2

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) include 'Anonymous caller' guidance in the 'MPS Public Protection – Domestic Abuse (DA) Policy.' Officers may benefit from specific guidance, where potential benefits and risks associated with contacting callers who wish to remain anonymous are outlined. Although this is relevant to all incidents/investigations it is particularly important in respect of domestic abuse.

This follows an IOPC investigation where police officers attended a report of a domestic abuse incident in progress involving Mr and Mrs A. The officers made no contact with the informant, partly due to them being categorised as 'anonymous.' Mr and Mrs A were spoken to separately and their accounts recorded, with no further action being taken. Nine days later Mrs A was fatally stabbed by Mr A at the same address.

The MPS DA policy does not currently provide any guidance to officers relating to 'anonymous callers.' However, the policy does state '*officers should identify all possible witnesses, family, neighbours, and informants and obtain statements if applicable.*' The officers did not contact the informant, who may have provided additional information, enabling a better understanding of the circumstances on which to inform the risk assessment and safeguarding decisions.

The MPS have provided the IOPC with information that from 6 February 2024 DA policy has been amended on this topic, we understand, as a result of our investigation.

MPS Response

The MPS accepts this recommendation.

On 7th February 2024, the MPS Frontline Policing Delivery Unit amended the MPS Domestic Abuse Policy. However, this will be amended further to include the following paragraph to reflect this recommendation:

“It is important that investigators follow all reasonable lines of enquiry in order to build a complete picture of what has taken place and support any investigation from an ‘Evidence Led’ perspective. Given that victims of DA often do not support a prosecution it is crucial that investigators seek all available evidence in order to build a strong case. At all DA incidents be sure to check the CAD and any linked CADs and contact any informants to find out what they saw or heard. This includes any callers recorded on the CAD as “Anon” in order to offer them the opportunity to assist the investigation and also build a wider intelligence picture should they wish to stay anonymous”.

Amendments to the policy will be communicated to all officers and staff via an Operational Notice published on the MPS internal website in July 2024.

IOPC Recommendation 3

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) provides guidance to all staff relating to the use of ‘Document Templates.’ Document templates contain pre-set wording generic to specific policing functions. They can act as a time saving guide to users when providing updates. Used correctly templates can provide structure and prompt required considerations. However, each incident or investigation reviewed should be considered on its unique individual circumstances with rationale for decision making documented. Simply copying the decision- making rationale from previous similar types of incident or investigation, without due consideration of the individual circumstances, may lead to the recording of inaccurate and/or misleading information. This may leave individual officers and the force open to scrutiny and criticism.

Additionally, to use the above provision of guidance as an opportunity to remind staff of the importance of providing ‘comprehensive updates,’ with rationale for decision making, particularly important at supervisory level.

This follows an IOPC investigation where two unrelated domestic abuse incidents, eighteen months apart, were updated by different supervising officers using the same document template. The supervisors’ comments relating to the investigation report, intelligence checks and safeguarding considerations were identical on the two templates. The level of scrutiny each supervisor gave to the actions and decisions of the initial investigating officer(s) is not apparent in the templates. If the MPS are using ‘standard document templates,’ to assist supervisors with assessment and decision making, it would seem reasonable to have expected additional comments of an individual nature relating to each of the two investigations in question, including decision making rationale.

It was also apparent that officers were not providing updates which included all necessary information and decision making rationale. On this occasion officers did not conduct house to house enquiries or contact the reporting person as part of their investigation. No explanation

was provided by the officers and their supervisor as to why these, DA policy required actions, were not completed.

MPS Response

The Metropolitan Police Service ("MPS") has reviewed and accepts the recommendation by the IOPC.

Whilst document templates that contain pre-set wording generic to policing tasks and actions are useful as both aide-memoires and time saving instruments to prompt users to consider various actions, all the information recorded on a report of crime must be contemporary and specific to that incident. This includes both MPS crime recording systems, which have had set questions to capture wording embedded into their structure, and could therefore be construed as 'templates' as well as free-standing aide-memoires in use for certain crime types.

Copying the decision-making rationale from previous/similar types of incident or investigation, on any police system/indices/template, without due consideration of the individual circumstances, is not relevant, applicable, or encouraged in the MPS. This therefore appears to be more of a compliance issue, rather than one of policy of guidance.

The MPS commits to the opportunity to remind staff of the importance of providing comprehensive updates with rationale for decision making, at both primary/secondary investigation and supervisory stage; the MPS General Investigation Policy is being renewed with a focus on Professional Curiosity, Reasonable Lines of Enquiry and Solvability, all of which encourage compassion and empathy on a case by case basis with individual updates and considerations bespoke to that case.

An addition shall be made to the final draft of the General Investigation Policy about the usefulness of templates (both embedded and free-form) to provide staff guidance that copying decision making rationale/crime details is not in line with investigatory/supervisory principles. The General Investigation Policy is drafted and awaiting test/challenge, and is set to be published within the next 3 months.

IOPC Recommendation 4

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) provides consistency across all MPS Domestic Abuse policy (DA), guidance and related documents in terms of whether the intelligence checks to be completed are for a 'period of five years,' or 'minimum of five years.' This should include consistency in the use of 'should' and/or 'must.'

This follows an IOPC investigation where it was found the 'Domestic Abuse, Stalking, Harassment and Honour Based Violence' (DASH) risk assessment pro-forma on the 'Crime Reporting Information System' (CRIS) report, directs officers to conduct intelligence checks for 'a five year period,' which is different to the MPS DA policy stipulating a 'minimum of five years.' This difference may cause confusion and lead to relevant safeguarding information being missed.

Additionally, the CRIS, DASH instruction states, 'PNC (Police National Computer) must be checked,' which differs from the MPS DA policy stating, 'the checks should be carried out on PNC and IIP (Integrated Information Platform).' This use of differing terms 'should' and 'must' creates ambiguity and would benefit from alignment of terminology.

MPS Response

The MPS accepts this recommendation.

The MPS Frontline Policing Delivery Unit will amend the MPS Domestic Abuse Policy to clarify that:

Intelligence checks **must** be completed for a minimum of five years on all parties involved in the incident whether victim, suspect or witness. Minimum indices to be searched include PNC (Police National Computer), CRIS (Crime Report Information System), MERLIN (Missing Persons & Related Linked Indices), CRIMINT (Criminal Intelligence System) and CONNECT (a single, integrated platform). If appropriate, to consider PND (Police National Database) when there are links to other force areas.

This will be completed in June 2024 and communicated via an Operational Notice published on the MPS internal website.

In addition, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are being re-drafted as part of the Strengthening Public Protection Programme. A full list of documents will be provided once they have been drafted.

IOPC Recommendation 5

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS):

(a) should provide guidance on what is expected of, ‘thorough intelligence checks,’ across all MPS Domestic Abuse (DA) policy, guidance and related documents. Potentially, ‘thorough intelligence checks’ will include all related incidents, particularly domestic related, that a party to the checks has been involved in which, for example, may indicate a propensity for violence (including weapons). This guidance should make clear that previous incidents that involve different parties to the one(s) involved in the latest incident, such as a different partner, or a relative or family member, may also be relevant.

(b) ensures all staff are made aware of the updated guidance once it is in place. The input to staff should be tailored relating to rank and responsibilities, with particular emphasis on the expectations of supervisors and managers when overseeing staff investigative and risk management decisions.

This follows an IOPC investigation relating to a DA incident where it was apparent officers were interpreting ‘thorough intelligence checks’ differently leading to relevant safeguarding information being missed.

The investigation found that three previous domestic incidents involving Mr A and his brothers fell within the stipulated five-year period for completing intelligence checks, yet the attending officer did not record these incidents in the checks they completed. Two of the three incidents reported that Mr A had threatened his brothers with a knife. Subsequently, these three historic incidents were not considered in the safeguarding arrangements for the family unit who remained together in the home. Nine days later Mr A fatally stabbed his wife whilst their two young children were present in the home.

One of the officers who attended the initial incident involving Mr and Mrs A stated they would not consider the previous sibling-based DA incidents to be relevant to the circumstances between Mr A and his wife, albeit this was not the officer who completed the intelligence checks that day. Providing staff with clear guidance regarding the expectations relating to intelligence checks, including parameters and relevant content, could help to ensure that they are properly informed to assist with making safeguarding decisions and implementing appropriate actions.

MPS Response

This recommendation is accepted.

The MPS Domestic Abuse Policy will be amended to reflect the suggested wording in this recommendation. This will be drafted in June 2024. This is being incorporated in the new Standard operating Procedures for investigators and supervisors. This is currently in draft and subject to a consultation process.

The amended guidance will be communicated to all officers and staff via an Operational Notice published on the MPS internal website. In addition, the Detective Inspectors and Detective Sergeants will be briefed at our monthly oversight meetings. The MPS will send a copy of the wording to the IOPC once it has been written.

IOPC Recommendation 6

The IOPC recommends the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) should amend the ‘Gathering Evidence’ section of its Domestic Abuse (DA) Policy. Currently it says, ‘Officers must ensure that they gather as much information as practicable... and record the information gathered and their reasoning on CAD.’ We recommend the policy is amended to say, ‘This should be recorded directly onto CRIS, or first in PNB/EAB/other MPS document, then transcribed onto CRIS’ (as per the now withdrawn ‘General Investigation Policy – Domestic Abuse’).

This follows an IOPC investigation where an anomaly was identified in relation to instructions in the Domestic Abuse Policy regarding the appropriate system on which to record information relating to the management of an investigation. Amongst its functions, the ‘*Computer Aided Dispatch*’ (CAD) is intended to record the initial stages of an investigation before being transferred onto the ‘*Crime Reporting Information System*’ (CRIS) for the future management of that investigation. Whilst the information gathered and reasoning of officer actions and decisions may be useful on the CAD, it should always be transferred onto the CRIS report as the primary source for information, investigative actions and decisions made.

PNB relates to ‘*Pocket Note Book*.’ which staff use to *make notes in during the course of their duties*. EAB relates to ‘*Evidence and Actions Book*’ and is used for the reporting of an allegation of crime.

Amending the Domestic Abuse Policy as recommended could help ensure that relevant evidence and information is included on the CRIS report, and not only the CAD, to support the effective management of the investigation.

MPS Response

The MPS accepts this recommendation.

The section referred to in this recommendation will be rewritten and clarified as per this recommendation in the MPS Domestic Abuse Policy.

This will be completed in June 2024 and communicated to all police officers and staff via an Operational Notice published on the MPS internal website.

The MPS will send a copy of this wording to the IOPC once it has been written.

IOPC Recommendation 7

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) should conduct a review of their 'refresher training programme' for its 'contact centre' staff, including non-permanent staff, and for all staff to have access to continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure their knowledge and skills remain refreshed and current.

This follows two IOPC investigations:

- Firstly, where an experienced 'contact centre' staff member, with nearly 16 years' service, appears not to have received any formal refresher training since the commencement of their employment. They stated they received messages, reminders and briefings, and set training days covering a myriad of topics. Based on their actions, our investigation has highlighted there may be a lack of knowledge amongst 'contact centre' staff regarding caller anonymity.
- Secondly, where a woman was found deceased in her home following a 101 call to police from a healthcare professional reporting a concern for her welfare. Our investigation identified that non-permanent staff, on overtime, were working in the MPS contact centre. Unlike the permanent staff in the contact centre, non-permanent staff are not subject to refresher training or CPD, but instead, need to complete at least one shift per month in the contact centre to maintain the criteria to provide cover. This means they were not always privy to changes in mandatory guidance for call handling.

Whilst we understand from the MPS that mandatory training is undertaken two days a year, covering a 'myriad of topics,' which may address some of the areas required to keep staff's knowledge and skills refreshed and current, content relating to the core skills required of the role is unknown, nor does there appear to be any such training offered to non-permanent staff.

When considering the totality of the circumstances, and specifically the type and frequency of training presently provided to 'contact centre' staff, including non-permanent staff, it is difficult to judge if this is adequate to refresh staff knowledge and to provide updates on changes that affect their roles. There is a potential safeguarding risk to members of the public and to the reputation of the MPS through the actions and decision making of 'contact centre' staff, who may have not been adequately trained then appropriately updated and developed through regular refresher training.

MPS Response

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has reviewed and ***partially accepts*** the recommendation by the IOPC.

In response to the IOPC's recommendation that the MPS conduct a review of the 'refresher training programme' for officers and staff to ensure alignment with Domestic Abuse (DA) policies and current best practices, the following points are provided for consideration.

MetCC update staff on key changes twice a year through Continuous Professional Development days (CPDs).

Content for our CPDs is provided by our Performance and Assurance Team, along with our Organisation Learning (OL) department. The OL department collates organisational learning from partners such as the IOPC, HMICFRS, the wider MPS and other national and local colleagues. Governance of CPD content is provided through the Training Board, ultimately signed off by the OCU Commander. This decision is based on learning requirements and organisational strategic priorities.

We have now ensured that the guidance on anonymous callers is included in the current round of CPDs running until Q4 (24-25).

In addition to the CPDs, we deliver training through; mandated online learning, bespoke training (Right Care, Right Person – RCRP - training, Front & Middle Line Leaders Programs), large information display screens placed throughout each of our three Centres on operational floors, a weekly digest sent to all staff – and the numbers of staff viewing this is tracked to ensure effectiveness, bespoke emails, and messages cascaded through line managers.

MetCC also has a dedicated 'Returner and Refresher' team who deliver bespoke refresher training to staff returning from extended periods of leave, such as career breaks, maternity leave, and long-term sickness. Each staff member undergoes a skills fade assessment, and the course is tailored to their specific needs.

VBOS (Voluntary Borough Officer Support – our non-permanent staff) make up just over 10% of our cohort but significantly less than 10% of our shifts. Officers receive bespoke training when there is a specific need, such as RCRP and training updates via email. In response to this recommendation we will explore how we can provide more structured training (CPD) to this group whilst balancing our needs with the needs of their home Command. This action will be recorded as Organisational Learning and developed and then tracked/audited through our Training Board.

We remain committed to ensuring our staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to handle Domestic Abuse cases effectively and in line with policy and best practice.

IOPC Recommendation 8

The IOPC recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) should conduct a review of their 'refresher training programme' for its officers and staff, to ensure that their knowledge and skills are aligned with policies associated with Domestic Abuse (DA) and they remain appraised of current best practice. This training should be tailored relating to rank and responsibilities, with particular emphasis on the expectations of

supervisors and managers when overseeing staff investigative and risk management decisions.

This follows an IOPC investigation where on reviewing police officer training records, after the initial DA training as a student officer, there does not appear to be any training that 'focuses' on investigating domestic abuse, which includes associated risk assessment and safeguarding actions. There appears to be some localised input to staff, on aspects associated with DA, but it does not appear to be targeted as part of an overall strategy to ensure officers are equipped to fulfil their responsibilities as outlined in the MPS DA policy.

It appears evident, from the witness interviews with the officers involved, that none had any depth of knowledge in relation to force policies associated with DA, particularly in relation to the mandatory responsibilities around investigative actions of the attending officers/supervisors and the importance of providing detailed updates, showing decision making rationale (including when actions are not completed). This limited knowledge would appear to correlate with the current lack of a refresher training programme, incorporated within the MPS strategy related to DA.

Domestic abuse is a high risk, priority area to police and at the forefront of public protection. There is a potential safeguarding risk to members of the public and to the reputation of the MPS through the actions and decision making of officers and staff, who may not have been adequately trained then appropriately updated and developed through regular refresher training.

MPS Response

The MPS accepts this recommendation.

The MPS Frontline Delivery Unit has already rolled out Continuous Professional Development training to all Emergency Response Policing Teams across the MPS.

The Strengthening Public Protection Programme has a specific pillar for training and includes domestic abuse as a key thematic that requires change.

The Front Line Leaders Programme has a specific input on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Abuse. This is delivered to all front line supervisors and consists of a half day input dedicated to VAWG and Domestic Abuse including building evidence led prosecutions, busting myths/stereotypes, challenging improper use of language and victim blaming. This is also covered in the mid-level leaders programme.

The new recruit training syllabus is in design and includes new inputs on domestic abuse. This will be completed in the Spring of 2024.

Finally, funding for DA Matters training has been allocated and will be delivered to approximately 11,000 officers and staff. The funding allocation awaits approval by the MPS Exec Committee and MOPAC investment board. The training is likely to begin in the first half of 2025.