

## ***What should a victim of domestic violence or harassment expect from a contemporary police service when making a allegation?***

### ***The definition of domestic Violence***

The ACPO definition is as follows:

*“ any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.” (Family members are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step-family.)*

The ACPO Guidance on Investigating Domestic Violence 2004 is a comprehensive reference document that builds upon existing best practice and advises on how domestic violence should be policed and investigated effectively. Within its content, the guidance advises how investigations can be improved and how officers can maximise each available opportunity to deliver an evidentially sound case that can be successfully prosecuted. The guidance focuses on every aspect of case handling from initial identification of a domestic violence case to the deployment of officers, through to first response, investigation development and the post arrest management of suspects.

In addition it reinforces that the requirement for positive action in domestic violence cases incurs obligations at every stage of the police response. These obligations extend from initial deployment to the response of the first officer on the scene, through the whole process of investigation and the protection and care of victims and children.

Police forces are expected to use the guidance to determine their response to incidences of domestic violence.

The guidance is divided into 9 chapters and provides a number of checklists for forces. For ease of reference, a summary of each of the chapters is provided below:

### **Section 1: Identification, Reporting and Referrals**

The chapter outlines the way in which reports of domestic violence or reports indicating domestic violence might come to the attention of the police. It also provides information about referrals made from other agencies, both statutory and non statutory, and intelligence in relation to identifying and targeting domestic violence cases.

### **Section 2: Deployment**

The chapter outlines the information that should be recorded by emergency report takers, and considerations regarding the deployment of officers to domestic violence incidents.

### **Section 3: Fast Track Action**

The chapter provides information to officers responsible for the fast track actions or first response. The information provided is not listed in order of priority, but is rather intended to offer information that is relevant to the first police responses in cases of domestic violence.

### **Section 4: Investigation Development: sources of evidence**

The chapter provides officers with information on possible sources of evidence in domestic violence cases. It highlights that officers should focus efforts on gathering evidence in order to charge a suspect and build a prosecution case that does not rely entirely on the victim's statement. It advises that information gained as part of the investigation should be used to identify risk factors and should be fed into any risk assessment processes.

### **Section 5: Post Arrest Management**

The chapter provides guidance on police action after an arrest has been made. Some of the information is relevant in circumstances where an arrest has not been made, but other positive action interventions were put into place.

### **Section 6: Specialist Investigations and Specialist Advocacy**

The chapter provides guidance for those carrying out a specialist domestic violence investigative role. This also includes child abuse investigation officers who are notified of child abuse or protection of children issues in domestic violence cases. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of specialist domestic violence officers and of police domestic violence coordinators. It also focuses upon the dual roles of investigation and protection.

### **Section 7: Managing Police Officers, Staff and Information Systems**

The chapter highlights supervision and management issues of particular significance to domestic violence. It is relevant to all police domestic violence coordinators and their managers. It is also relevant to ACPO officers nominated with leadership responsibility for cases involving police suspects in domestic violence cases.

### **Section 8: Multi-Agency Working**

The chapter provides an outline of multi agency responsibilities and the variety of ways in which they might be discharged. The section is useful to any officer engaged in partnership working, particularly police domestic violence coordinators and those working at strategic level in crime and disorder partnerships. In addition, Specialist domestic violence officers in contact with other agencies will also find it useful.

### **Section 9: Roles and responsibilities of other agencies**

The chapter aims to provide a brief outline of the key domestic violence functions of a range of statutory and voluntary sector organisations.