

**ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL**

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Public Protection
<b>DATE</b>	27 October 2021
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Coercive Control
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	POL/21/234
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Detective Chief Inspector Carron McKellar North East Division, Police Scotland
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	5.7

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To update members regarding 'Coercive Control' following the implementation of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 in April 2019.

**2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 The Committee discuss, comment on and endorse the report.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Tackling Domestic Abuse is a priority for Police Scotland. Prior to 2018, it was recognised that Domestic Abuse was wider than physical and sexual abuse and that emotional abuse in the form of 'coercive control' played a large part in perpetrators abusing victims.
- 3.2 The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 (from herein referred to as 'the Act') came into force on 1 April 2019. The Act represents a significant change in the law and adds to existing common law and statutory offences by making a range of abusive behaviours an offence, including those of a physical, sexual and psychological nature which are perpetrated within a Domestic relationship.
- 3.3 To ensure the effective use of this legislation, all Police Officers received comprehensive training, 'Domestic Abuse Matters (Scotland)', and across North East Division there are a further 65 officers who have been trained as Domestic Abuse 'Champions', local experts who provide advice and guidance to their peers to ensure all possible evidence of coercive control and other abusive behaviours are explored fully.

## **APPLICATION OF THE ACT**

- 3.4 During its first year of enactment, indicative figures provide that within Aberdeen City, 159 Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 were reported within Aberdeen City, of which 114 were detected, giving a detection rate of 71.7%. This is in the context of 2294 Domestic offences being recorded across the city in the same period, with a detection rate of 70% overall.
- 3.5 Between 01 April 2020 and 31st March 2021 indicative figures provide that 140 Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 offences were reported within Aberdeen City, of which 96 were detected, giving a detection rate of 68.6%. This is in the context of 2456 Domestic offences being recorded across the City, of which 1914 were detected, giving a detection rate of 77.9% overall.
- 3.6 To date for this financial year, indicative figures provide that, within Aberdeen City, 82 Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 offences have been reported. This is in the context of 1087 Domestic offences having been recorded across the city since 1 April 2021. At this time, the proportion of Domestic offences which come under the Act, has risen slightly this year.
- 3.7 The use of the Act is thoroughly embedded in Police process. When considering the numbers of offences recorded under the Act, it is important to note that one offence can relate to behaviour or behaviours perpetrated over a period of time and this only relates to any behaviour that has occurred since April 2019 when the Act was enacted.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF COVID-19**

- 3.8 The period of reporting covering 2020 in particular has undoubtedly been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and this picture is replicated across Scotland. Overall demand reduced significantly in many aspects of the Policing Priority 'Protecting People at Risk of Harm' at the outset of the lockdown restrictions associated with the Pandemic.
- 3.8 Conversely, reporting of Domestic Abuse incidents throughout lockdown was relatively unchanged. Strong messaging regarding the hidden harm in this area in particular has undoubtedly contributed to this and this is also reflected in the levels of support sought by victims from partners. In addition to a rise in detections of Domestic offences, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) referral (co-ordinated through the Police), have increased month on month, ensuring that those most at risk and at need are provided with appropriate support to mitigate the risk posed to them.
- 3.9 The Scottish Government Domestic Abuse campaign, in conjunction with Police Scotland and Safer Scotland, was well supported in North East Division social media channels and built upon by the Violence Against Women Partnerships (VAWP) to ensure victims were aware that support was available locally and nationally despite COVID-19 restrictions. The local messages were translated into the 10 most requested languages in the North East and sent out through community channels to ensure the messages were as wide-

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reaching as possible. This included articles published in local community newsletters and distributed to locality areas, aiming to reach those who may not have internet access.

- 3.10 To support its efforts regarding the Act, the division has also been driving forward awareness raising and training with partners regarding multi-agency processes which have been continuing throughout this time to protect those most at risk. This includes the Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS), the MARAC process (aiming to reduce future harm to the most vulnerable victims and their families), and the management and scrutiny of perpetrators provided by the Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) process following a national review, where the objective is to protect people at risk of harm by targeting higher risk perpetrators.

**SUMMARY**

- 3.11 It has been thoroughly embedded into Police process and forms the basis of risk assessments and seeking support for victims through close working with partners, such as Rape Crisis and Grampian Women’s Aid who are also able to provide advice and guidance to those victims who do not feel ready to report any form of Domestic Abuse to the Police.
- 3.12 Given the context of the Pandemic over the last year and a half, it is difficult to look at comparative data within that time period. However, the strength of working in partnership with support agencies has ensured that there has been no decrease in reporting of Domestic Abuse as was expected.
- 3.13 Continued awareness raising of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 to Police Officers and other practitioners in Aberdeen City carried out by Police and the wider partnership, along with current governance structures and training for Police, will ensure the Act continues to be used effectively by North East Division.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

**6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
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<b>Financial</b>	N/A		
<b>Legal</b>	N/A		
<b>Employee</b>	N/A		
<b>Customer</b>	N/A		
<b>Environment</b>	N/A		
<b>Technology</b>	N/A		
<b>Reputational</b>	N/A		

**7. OUTCOMES**

<b>Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes</b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Prosperous People</b>	Police Scotland are key partners within Community Planning Aberdeen and help contribute to the shared vision for 2026 that 'Aberdeen is a place where all people can prosper' and towards the achievement of the LOIP theme which aims to make people more resilient and protect them from harm; where every child, irrespective of their circumstances, is supported to grow, develop and reach their full potential; and where all people in Aberdeen are entitled to live within our community in a manner in which they feel safe and protected from harm, supported when necessary and fully included in the life of the City.
<b>Prosperous Place</b>	Police Scotland are key partners within Community Planning Aberdeen and help contribute to the shared vision for 2026 that 'Aberdeen is a place where all people can prosper' and towards the achievement of the LOIP theme which aims to support individuals and communities to live in healthy, sustainable ways; and the development of sustainable communities with strong and resilient communities.

<b>Design Principles of Target Operating Model</b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Governance</b>	The Council has an oversight role of the North East Division of Police Scotland in terms of its performance and delivery of the Local Police Plan.
<b>Partnerships and Alliances</b>	The Council and Police Scotland are Community Planning Aberdeen partners with a shared commitment to deliver the LOIP.

**8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

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<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Equality &amp; Human Rights Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Duty of Due Regard/Fairer Scotland Duty</b>	Not applicable.

**9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A

**10. APPENDICES (if applicable)**

N/A

**11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS**

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