WHAT WE DID

IN JUNE 2020 WE SENT OUT A QUESTIONNAIRE TO ALL ELIGIBLE POLICE FORCES IN ENGLAND AND WALES ASKING THEM ABOUT THE IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON THEIR RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC ABUSE. WE RECEIVED 26 RESPONSES FROM 25 DIFFERENT POLICE FORCES. WE THEN FOLLOWED THESE UP INTERVIEWING 21 DOMESTIC ABUSE LEADS FROM 20 DIFFERENT POLICE FORCES.

WHAT WE FOUND

ALL RESPONDENTS MADE SOME REFERENCE TO THE IMPACT OF LOCK-DOWN ON THE REPORTED INCIDENCE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE IN THEIR FORCE AREA. THE MAJORITY (19/26) SAID DOMESTIC ABUSE CALLS DECLINED INITIALLY IN MARCH AND THEN RETURNED TO NORMAL BY MAY.

ALL RESPONDENTS REFERRED TO FACEBOOK PAGES, ONLINE SURGERIES, THE DEVELOPMENT OF WEBCHAT FACILITIES, AND/OR MEANS OF MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH VICTIMS, WHEN SAFE TO DO SO, BY TELEPHONE AND/OR SKYPE CALLS.

ALL RESPONDENTS HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF VIRTUAL MEETINGS/VIDEO CONFERENCING FOR MULTI-AGENCY WORKING OF DIFFERENT KINDS & AT DIFFERENT LEVELS.
WHAT WE FOUND

THESE HEADLINES MASK A HUGE VARIETY OF RESPONSES IN DIFFERENT FORCE AREAS BUT THE CAPACITY FOR INNOVATION AND SPEEDY RESPONSES TO ENSURE DOMESTIC ABUSE REMAINED IN VIEW IS STRIKING.

WE REVISITED THESE FINDINGS IN OUR INTERVIEWS. THE USE AND VALUE OF VIRTUAL PLATFORMS FOR INTER-AGENCY MEETINGS WAS DISCUSSED WITH ALL RESPONDENTS. THESE DISCUSSIONS POINTED TO THE GREATER EFFICIENCY AND POTENTIAL FOR A SPEEDIER RESPONSE TO VICTIM-SURVIVORS AS WELL AS IMPROVED ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNERS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FURTHER DETAILS ON THE FINDINGS FROM THIS WORK CAN BE FOUND IN WORKING PAPER 4: INNOVATING DURING THE PANDEMIC: POLICING DOMESTIC ABUSE AND MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCING (MARACS)

HTTPS://WWW.LIVERPOOL.AC.UK/LAW-AND-SOCIAL-JUSTICE/RESEARCH/Corona-virus-research/Theshadow-pandemic/

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1 All police forces in England & Wales, where possible & practicable, move towards using MS Teams for MARAC business.

2 Appropriate infrastructural IT support is provided to enable this where it does not already exist. Police and Crime Commissioners are encouraged as a matter of urgency to provide funds for the development of such systems as appropriate.

3 Depending on local force demands, MARACs meet at least weekly to ensure a timely, informed, and targeted response to high risk victims.

4 As far as possible, unless local situations prevent it, the same MARAC practices should be adopted within each police force, and across all police forces.

5 That ongoing efforts to ensure the attendance of all relevant agencies are sustained.