Presentation to Police Regional Leads and Stakeholders for Domestic Abuse, 8th September 2020.

Project Title.
Domestic Abuse: Responding to the Shadow Pandemic (ESRC funded).

Project Team.
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Project Aims.
Project started in June 2020 and will run to December 2021. The focus is to:

1. Document policing and court response to DA under lockdown, transitioning out of lock-down, and during the legacy period in England and Wales.
2. Focus attention on innovative practices and their longevity.
3. Against the background of available statistics and examples of good practice make recommendations on responding to DA going forward.

**What we have done so far.**

1. We have working papers and other documents free to download from our webpage found here: [https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/law-and-social-justice/research/coronavirus-research/the-shadow-pandemic/working-papers/](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/law-and-social-justice/research/coronavirus-research/the-shadow-pandemic/working-papers/)

2. Reviewed all police force websites and considered their accessibility for DA victims seeking support.

3. Sent out an online questionnaire to all DA leads.

4. Interviewed members of the Magistrate’s Association.

5. In the process of negotiation data access with the CPS and the Courts.

6. Interviewed (ongoing) DA leads expressing a willingness to talk with us.
Key Findings to Date.

1. Clarity and availability of information for victims on force websites is very mixed.
2. Of the 41 forces eligible for this study we have had 26 questionnaire responses from 25 different forces. Of these initial findings suggest:
   - For 19/26 domestic abuse calls declined initially in March and then returned to normal by May
   - 4/26 respondents mentioned the knock-on effects of court closures and the absence of face-to-face men’s behavioural programmes and lack of emergency accommodation
   - All respondents referred either to Facebook pages, online surgeries, the development of webchat facilities, and/or maintaining contact with victims, when safe to do so, by telephone and/or Skype calls
   - Microsoft Teams seems to have been a game changer during lock-down for a wide range of organisations and this includes the police. All respondents commented on the significance and value of being able to maintain inter-agency working relationships virtually using this platform.
   - Huge variety in practices.
Key Messages for Reflection.

1. 3/26 drew attention to perpetrator focused activities under lock-down viz repeat victimisation. Good practice?

2. Justice by geography.

Concluding Comment.

The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners Report published in April 2020 contains the statements of 34 police commissioners’ priorities for protecting the vulnerable during lock-down. Twenty of these statements tally with 20 police areas covered by our respondents. Of these twenty, only 11 mention domestic abuse support in the broadest sense in their list of priorities in relation to such protection. This is interesting given the crucial role afforded to such commissioners in commissioning local victim support services including the provision of Refuge spaces. This reminds us of the complex and kaleidoscopic world in which local service responses to domestic abuse are constructed, prioritised and not always, or indeed exclusively even at a local level, in the gift of the police alone.

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