



CPS Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence

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1 Introduction

- 1.1** This policy statement explains the way we, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), deal with cases involving domestic violence. It gives advice on what the CPS does, how domestic violence cases are prosecuted, and what victims can expect from the CPS. The document is particularly designed for those who support victims of domestic violence, whether professionally or personally, although it may also be of interest to victims, witnesses and the general public.
- 1.2** We regard domestic violence as particularly serious. Its domestic nature is an aggravating, rather than a mitigating, factor because of the abuse of trust that is involved. Victims know and often live with or have lived with their abuser. Moreover, there is often a continuing threat to the victim's safety and, in the worst cases, the victim's life and the lives of others (including children and young people) may be at risk. Stopping domestic violence and bringing perpetrators to justice is therefore a priority for the CPS.
- 1.3** This is the third edition of the policy statement. It reflects changes to the law, procedures and other developments that have taken place since the publication of the second edition in 2005. These changes include:
- the roll-out of statutory charging;
 - the training of CPS staff on domestic violence;
 - the implementation of new special measures for victims and witnesses;
 - the roll-out of specialist domestic violence courts (SDVCs), Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs), and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs);

- the publication of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the Prosecutors' Pledge; and
- the introduction of Witness Care Units.

1.4 Some words and phrases used in this document may not be familiar to everybody. We have therefore set out a glossary of terms at the back of this document in which we have defined some of the words and phrases used.

1.5 We are publishing this statement because we want those who support victims, victims themselves, their families, witnesses, and the general public to be confident that the CPS understands that domestic violence is very serious, and that it can inflict lasting trauma on victims and their extended families. We want people to know that our aim is to prosecute domestic violence cases effectively, and we want people to know what they can expect from us.

1.6 People have the right to feel safe and be safe in their personal relationships. The safety of the victim is a primary issue for us to consider when making our decisions. We know that domestic violence can have a devastating effect not only upon the victim but also upon families and especially upon children and young people who witness and suffer directly the consequences of that violence. We also acknowledge that even where a child or young person does not see violence, but is aware of or hears violence, that child or young person may be similarly affected.

1.7 Stopping domestic violence and bringing perpetrators to justice must therefore be a priority for the CPS. We are determined to play our part by prosecuting cases effectively and fairly, monitoring our performance, and working within a multi-agency approach. We recognise that criminal

proceedings are just one element of this approach and that the criminal and civil law may need to be used in conjunction with support services for victims to address their safety. Where there are concurrent criminal and civil proceedings, we will work to prioritise the safety of victims and children and young people.

- 1.8** We acknowledge that victims of domestic violence are more likely to be repeat victims than other victims of crime. We are aware that this can create additional barriers for victims.
- 1.9** We realise that victims of domestic violence – particularly those who may have suffered over a considerable time – have difficult decisions to make that will affect their lives and the lives of those close to them. We acknowledge that some victims may not wish to go through the criminal law at all, preferring to make use of civil remedies and other safety and support mechanisms.
- 1.10** We are aware that there are a number of myths and stereotypes surrounding domestic violence. We will not allow these to influence our decisions and we will robustly challenge such attitudes in the courtroom.
- 1.11** We know that domestic violence is likely to become more frequent and more serious the longer it continues, and that it can result in death. Because we are aware of these risks, we will sometimes continue with a prosecution even if a victim asks us not to. In these cases, we will make the fullest enquiries, through the police and with any support services, to ensure that our decision to prosecute is made in light of all available information and with the safety of the victim and any children at the forefront of our minds.

- 1.12** We will continue to work and train with the police, other colleagues in the criminal justice system and voluntary and community groups, both locally and nationally, to help us improve our understanding of domestic violence and make appropriate decisions that aim to ensure the safety of the victim and any children. This policy statement is supported by more detailed guidance for all CPS prosecutors, associate prosecutors and caseworkers so that they have a clear understanding of the policy and how we deal with this sort of crime.
- 1.13** We acknowledge that for some individuals, there are additional barriers that make them less likely to report offences. For example, victims who are or have been in a relationship with their abuser for some time may blame themselves or feel that agencies may blame them, and they may face wider difficulties such as disruption to the lives of their children and extended families. This maybe especially true where the victim is elderly or where their abuser is also their carer.
- 1.14** People from Black and minority ethnic communities may have experienced racism from the criminal justice system. They may fear that they will not be believed, or that they will not be treated properly. As a result, they may be reluctant to report offences or support a prosecution. In particular, a number of women may feel that they are unable to leave their abuser because they could be financially dependant; unable to speak or understand English; or their immigration status in the UK may be unclear. Cultural and religious beliefs may also deter people from reporting offences or supporting a prosecution.

- 1.15** We are committed to prosecuting with the full force of the law those that are found to harm others in the name of 'honour'. We have a duty to protect all victims of crime.
- 1.16** There are no specific criminal offences of 'forced marriage' or 'honour crime' in England and Wales. Forced marriage and so-called 'honour' crime are umbrella terms to encompass offences already covered by existing legislation. Individuals committing such crimes may be prosecuted for a range of offences under a variety of legislation.
- 1.17** Forced marriage and so-called 'honour' crime are a violation of human rights and may be a form of domestic and/or sexual violence. 'So-called Honour Based Violence' cuts across all cultures, nationalities, faith groups and communities. Such violence transcends national and international boundaries.
- 1.18** The definition we have adopted for forced marriage is: "A marriage without the consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor". A forced marriage is distinct from an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, although families may take a leading role in choosing the partners, the choice of whether or not to consent to the arrangement remains with the potential spouses.
- 1.19** The definition we have adopted in respect to 'honour' crime is: "a crime or incident that has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community." The simplicity of the definition is not intended in any way to minimise the levels of violence, harm and hurt caused by such acts. We are aware that honour crime is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families to protect perceived cultural and religious

beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed their family and/or their community by breaking their honour code.

- 1.20** We will ensure that when considering cases of domestic violence we will be mindful that victims may be subjected to pressure from families, friends and communities within this context.
- 1.21** Victims in same sex relationships may have experienced homophobic reactions from the criminal justice system. They may also fear being “outed” by the process. Transgender victims may have experienced transphobic reactions.
- 1.22** People with physical disabilities, children and young victims and some older people may have difficulty in reporting offences to the police and accessing support services. Similarly they and victims suffering from mental illness or learning difficulties may feel that they will not be believed if they report offences. These are additional barriers and we will inform these people about support services where appropriate and available.
- 1.23** Every person has an equal right to be protected by the criminal law and by the CPS. We recognise that equality and diversity – and by this we mean treating people fairly, whilst respecting people’s differences – is fundamental to delivering fair prosecutions, and essential if we are to command the confidence of all the communities we serve. This policy statement therefore applies to people from all backgrounds and communities.

1.24 We work with Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (who work alongside victims from the point of crisis through the criminal justice system and beyond) and a number of national and local organisations (for example, the Witness Support Service), which offer support to victims throughout the proceedings. Special measures can be used to help a victim or witness to give evidence.

2 What is domestic violence?

2.1 There is no specific statutory offence of domestic violence. “Domestic violence” is a general term that describes a range of controlling and coercive behaviours, which are used by one person to maintain control over another with whom they have, or have had, an intimate or family relationship. It is the cumulative and interlinked physical, psychological, sexual, emotional or financial abuse that has a particularly damaging effect on the victim. Domestic violence occurs throughout society, amongst people of all ethnicities, sexualities, ages, disabilities, immigration statuses, religions or beliefs, and socio-economic backgrounds. We recognise that both men and women can be victims. Although the majority of victims are women, and taking action against domestic violence is included as part of the CPS Violence against Women Strategy, we will apply our domestic violence policy without discrimination in all cases.

2.2 The Government definition of domestic violence against both men and women (agreed in 2004) is:

“any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse [psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional] between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.”

2.3 An *adult* is any person aged 18 years and over and *family members* are defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents, whether directly related, in-laws or step-family. The definition is supported by an

explanatory text that makes it clear that domestic violence includes female genital mutilation, forced marriage and so-called “honour crimes”.

- 2.4** This definition replaced the various definitions used by individual Government departments and agencies and has helped to improve joint working practices and monitoring.
- 2.5** Because domestic violence against and by people of all ages needs to be dealt with seriously, and because victims’, children’s and young people’s safety issues and defendant accountability are so important to us, we will also apply our domestic violence policy when dealing with criminal offences that occur in a domestic context involving victims and abusers *whatever their age*.
- 2.6** Some examples of behaviour that might amount to a criminal offence are given at Annex A.

3 The role of the CPS

- 3.1** The CPS is one part of the criminal justice system, which includes other organisations such as the police, the courts, defence lawyers, the National Offender Management Service, Youth Offender Teams (YOTs), the Witness Service and the Prison Service.
- 3.2** We are a public prosecution service for England and Wales, headed by the Director of Public Prosecutions. We were set up in 1986 to prosecute cases investigated by the police. Although we work closely with the police, we are independent of them. The independence of prosecutors is of fundamental constitutional importance. We are answerable to Parliament through the Attorney General, who is the senior Law Officer of the Crown and also a Government Minister.
- 3.3** We are a national organisation consisting of 42 Areas, with an out-of-hours service called 'CPS Direct'. Each Area is headed by a Chief Crown Prosecutor and corresponds to a single police force area, but with one Area covering London. The Areas are now organised into 14 Groups. Each is lead by a Group Chair Chief Crown Prosecutor. London has its own management team headed by the Chief Crown Prosecutor of London.
- 3.4** The police are responsible for investigating allegations of domestic violence and for gathering the evidence. Their policy and guidance is consistent with that of the CPS. Police guidance states that where an offence has been committed in a domestic violence case, arrest will normally be 'necessary' to protect a child or vulnerable person, prevent

the suspect causing injury, and/or allow for the prompt and effective investigation of the offence. The police will assess the risk faced by domestic violence victims and where support services exist refer victims to them.

- 3.5** Since 2004, we have had the responsibility for deciding (in all but the most minor cases) whether a suspect should be charged with a criminal offence, and, if so, what the charge(s) should be.
- 3.6** The police do not refer every complaint of a criminal offence to us. However, when the police have reasonable suspicion that a suspect has committed an offence involving domestic violence, they must refer that case to a prosecutor, who will make a decision whether to charge. Prosecutors are therefore involved at an early stage in advising on cases of domestic violence.
- 3.7** Although we take into account victims' views and are concerned to make sure they are supported and kept safe, we are not their legal representative and cannot act on their behalf. The CPS is responsible for initiating domestic violence prosecutions and prosecutes cases on behalf of the state.
- 3.8** Where the CPS makes a decision not to charge on the basis of a written file of evidence from the police, or decides to drop or substantially to amend a charge, we will inform the victim in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. However, where matters have been dealt with very quickly, we may not always be able to give the explanation before the case is finished.
- 3.9** Letters to vulnerable or intimidated witnesses should be sent within 24 hours of a decision being reached and within five

days in all other cases. We are aware that it is extremely important that victims are notified quickly of our decisions given the implications that the decision may have upon a victim's safety.

3.10 We will also ensure that we set out in the letter information to enable the victim to access appropriate support services, such as helplines and local services.

3.11 When writing, we will be sensitive to the possibility that the defendant may have access to this letter. In certain cases, our letter will also offer a meeting with the prosecutor where a fuller explanation may be provided. We will not write a letter on the basis of a decision made by the police. A copy of our: 'Domestic Violence – How prosecution decisions are reached' can be obtained from CPS Communications Branch or from the CPS website at:

www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/domestic/index.html

3.12 As part of our commitment to improve the prosecution of cases of domestic violence, in 2001 we established a network of domestic violence coordinators. Every CPS Area including CPS Direct has a coordinator responsible for domestic violence. They work with other agencies to implement our policy, address problems, identify and share good practice, and they attend multi-agency meetings. All prosecutors, associate prosecutors, and caseworkers in the CPS have been trained on domestic violence.

4 The Code for Crown Prosecutors

- 4.1** The Code for Crown Prosecutors sets out how we make decisions about whether or not to prosecute. The Code is a public document. We review the cases referred to us by the police in line with the Full Code Test set out in the Code. The Full Code Test has two stages.

The evidential stage

- 4.2** We must be satisfied first of all that there is enough evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction against each defendant on each charge. This means that a jury or a bench of magistrates or a judge hearing a case alone, properly directed in accordance with the law, is more likely than not to convict the defendant of the alleged charge.
- 4.3** The test that we use to decide whether or not to prosecute is different from the one applied by the court before it may convict a defendant. For there to be a conviction, we have to prove the case so that the court is sure of the defendant's guilt. This is a very high standard of proof and there are many reasons why a defendant may not be convicted. Victims and witnesses should not assume that a defendant has been acquitted because their evidence has not been believed.
- 4.4** If the case does not pass the evidential stage it must not go ahead, no matter how important or serious it may be.

The public interest stage

- 4.5** If the case does pass the evidential stage, we must decide if a prosecution is needed in the public interest. A prosecution will usually take place unless: “there are public interest factors tending against prosecution which clearly outweigh those tending in favour” (Code for Crown Prosecutors).
- 4.6** When considering the public interest stage, one of the factors that Crown Prosecutors should always take into account is: “the consequences for the victim of the decision whether or not to prosecute, and any views expressed by the victim or the victim’s family” paragraph 5.12 of the Code for Crown Prosecutors. We always think very carefully about the interests of the victim when we decide where the public interest lies. But we prosecute cases on behalf of the public at large and not just based on the interests of any particular individual. There can be difficulties in striking this balance. The views and interests of the victim are important, but they cannot be the final word on the subject of a CPS prosecution. Any future risks to the victim, their children or any other potential victim have to be taken into consideration.

The Threshold Test

- 4.7** Crown Prosecutors will apply the Full Code Test wherever possible. However, there will sometimes be cases when the person arrested will be considered unsuitable to be granted bail but when not all the evidence is available at the time a charging decision has to be made.
- 4.8** In such cases, when the investigation is incomplete, the CPS may apply the Threshold Test. However, the Threshold Test

can only be applied when all the following conditions are met:

- there is insufficient evidence to apply the Full Code Test;
- there are reasonable grounds for believing better evidence will be available in a reasonable time;
- the seriousness of the circumstances justifies the making of an immediate charging decision; and
- there are continuing substantial grounds to object to bail.

4.9 Where all these conditions are met, the Threshold Test may be applied and the suspect charged. A decision to charge under the Threshold Test must be kept under review and the Full Code Test must be applied to the case as soon as reasonably practicable.

5 Is there enough evidence to prosecute?

- 5.1** We will work closely with the police to make sure that all available evidence from all sources has been gathered and brought to our attention as quickly as possible. Effective gathering of evidence by the police may include, for example, 999 tapes, statements from other witnesses (for example, neighbours, healthcare professionals, children, etc.), CCTV footage, forensic evidence, and police observations at the scene (for example, furniture overturned and injuries sustained). We will consider the evidence carefully and make our decisions as quickly as possible. We will also try to make sure that cases progress through the court without avoidable delay.
- 5.2** We will encourage the police to make full use of the ACPO (2008) Guidance on Investigating Domestic Abuse and the ACPO (2009) Guidance on Stalking and Harassment.
- 5.3** A victim's account in court or statement to the police of what happened is evidence. However, it is not the only evidence that can be used to prove a case. We will actively consider what other evidence may be available. It is possible, for example, that a friend, neighbour or child or young person may have been nearby and may be able to give direct evidence of what they saw or heard. In certain circumstances, a friend, neighbour, child or young person may be able to give evidence of something that someone else told them (this is called 'hearsay' evidence). This direct or indirect information may also be important background information that will enable the prosecutor to put the offence into context.

- 5.4** In other cases, there may be medical evidence (such as from the local Doctor and Accident and Emergency notes or a Hospital Doctor's statement) or photographs of the victim's injuries that can be used as evidence. In some limited circumstances, we may also be able to use evidence of the defendant's previous bad character (for example, convictions or cautions) to help us prove a case.
- 5.5** Domestic violence often takes place in private and, at times, the victim may be the only witness. This can mean that, unless the defendant pleads guilty or there is strong supporting evidence, it will usually be necessary for the victim to give evidence in court. We recognise that many victims of domestic violence will find this very difficult – sometimes because they fear for their own or their children's safety. It is also possible that the victim may have an emotional attachment or feel loyalty to the defendant. They may need practical and emotional support and specialist domestic violence support services.
- 5.6** In some areas, Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) and other specialist domestic violence services are available to provide this type of support. Emotional and practical help for all victims of crime is also available from Victim Support and the Witness Service. Contact details for these support agencies are given at Annex C. In some cases, the CPS can make an application to the court to allow victims to use special measures to help them give their best evidence.
- 5.7** We know that some complaints of domestic violence are not made straight away for fear of reprisals, intimidation or a number of other factors. Again, specialist domestic violence

support services will be able to offer help and advice to victims who are unsure about what action to take.

- 5.8** We will prosecute cases where there is sufficient evidence and it is in the public interest to do so.

What happens when the victim withdraws support for the prosecution or no longer wishes to give evidence?

- 5.9** Sometimes, victims will ask the police not to proceed any further with the case and say that they no longer wish to give evidence. There may be a number of explanations for this. This does not mean that the case will automatically be stopped.

- 5.10** When this happens, we have to find out why the victim has asked for the case to be stopped, before we can decide what action to take. This may involve applying to the court for time to investigate the facts and decide the best course of action, which may delay the proceedings. The identification of the risks, assessment and management of the victim, children, young people, or any other potentially vulnerable person will be a prime consideration in reaching our decision.

- 5.11** We will take the following steps:

- we will ensure that a prosecutor experienced in domestic violence matters supervises the case;
- if the information about the victim's decision has come from the defendant, we will ask the police to make further enquiries (particularly as it may reveal a breach of the defendant's bail);
- if the victim confirms that the information is true, we will ask the police to take a written statement from the victim.

This statement should explain the reasons for withdrawing support, confirm whether the original statement was true, confirm whether the victim has been put under pressure to withdraw support, and provide any other relevant information;

- we will ask the police to give their views (and to consult with the IDVA, where there is one, for the most up-to-date information) about the evidence in the case and how they think the victim might react to being called to attend court against their wishes; and
- we will ask the police to make sure that the full risk assessment of the victim, any children and any other person's safety is up-to-date. The risk assessment should include details of what support is available to the victim, what has been offered, and what the victim has accepted.

5.12 If the victim confirms that the complaint is true but still wants to withdraw, we will consider first whether it is possible to continue without the victim's evidence (the evidential stage) and then, if it is possible, whether we should continue with the case when the victim does not support the prosecution (the public interest stage).

5.13 If the victim's statement after withdrawing the complaint is not the same as their earlier statement, the police will ask the victim to explain why it has changed and, if necessary, investigate the background further.

5.14 The prosecutor will want to know the reasons why the victim no longer wishes to give evidence. This may be because the victim is reconciled with the defendant or has concerns about being responsible for the defendant possibly receiving a criminal record. It may be that the victim is experiencing feelings of embarrassment or fears that they may not be

believed. It may be that the victim lives in a place in which they feel isolated or particularly vulnerable, where supporting the prosecution may place the victim at further risk of harm. It might also be that the victim is lesbian, gay or bisexual and is fearful of being 'outed' in such proceedings. In such cases, the prosecutor must have regard to any special measures or other support available to the victim that may help them, at least in part, to overcome their concerns.

- 5.15** If we suspect that the victim has been pressured or frightened into withdrawing the complaint, we will ask the police to investigate further. The investigation may reveal new offences, for example, harassment or witness intimidation, or may reveal that bail conditions have been breached. If necessary, we will ask the court to delay any hearing so that a thorough investigation may take place before we decide about the future of the case. If the reason for a victim or witness's withdrawal is based on fear or intimidation, the prosecutor will consider the evidence and decide whether further charges should be brought.
- 5.16** We will explore these options fully before we decide whether or not to proceed with a prosecution. The safety of the victim or any other potentially vulnerable person will be a prime consideration when reaching our decision. The fact that a victim withdraws a complaint does not mean that they can no longer call the police. The victim is still entitled to future protection. We are aware that in some cases pressure may be exerted by the victim's family, friends or community and we will ensure that this possibility is considered when making decisions.

What happens when a decision is taken to continue with a prosecution against the victim's wishes?

- 5.17** Generally, the more serious the offence (for example, where children or young people were present, or where there was considerable violence, or where there is the real and continuing threat to the victim or others), the more likely we are to prosecute in the public interest, even if the victim says that they do not wish us to do so.
- 5.18** In cases where we have sufficient other evidence, we may decide to proceed without relying on the evidence of the victim at all.
- 5.19** If we think that the case should continue and that it would be necessary to rely on the victim's evidence to prove the case, we have to decide:
- whether we should apply to the court to use the victim's statement as evidence without the victim having to give evidence in court;
 - whether we can proceed with the prosecution by helping the victim to attend court by the use of special measures; or
 - whether we should require the victim to give evidence in person in court against their wishes.
- 5.20** In very limited circumstances, the law allows us to use the victim's statement in court without calling the victim to give oral evidence (for example, where the victim is in fear or cannot be found). This is a matter for the court to decide, and the court can only decide to allow this to happen if it is in the interests of justice to do so. If the victim is the only witness to the offence, it may be very difficult to satisfy the

court that the trial can be fair when the defence cannot cross-examine the only witness against them.

- 5.21** In some cases, we will also be able to apply to the court for special measures to assist the victim to give their best evidence.
- 5.22** Background information is crucial in helping a prosecutor to make the correct decision about how to proceed with a case where the victim has withdrawn their support for the prosecution. The police will provide this information to prosecutors to help them make that decision.
- 5.23** Under current legislation, we can require husbands, wives or civil partners to give evidence about an assault or threat of injury by their spouse. We can also call unmarried partners, including same sex partners, or family members to give evidence in court against their wishes about any offence.
- 5.24** In cases where it is necessary to call victims to court against their wishes, an experienced prosecutor will make that decision but only after consulting the police and after they have considered the safety of the victim and any child or vulnerable person. We will also consider any further or unintended consequences (for example, repeat victimisation) that could arise as a result of the case proceeding, whether these relate to the victim or defendant's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, immigration status, age, gender identity, religion or belief, disability, or other identity.
- 5.25** There are strict legal rules of evidence which govern whether a suspect's previous convictions or other evidence of bad character can be used in court. We have to bear these rules

in mind when we are deciding whether we can proceed with a case.

- 5.26** Even if this type of evidence cannot be used to prove the defendant's guilt, it may be important background information that will enable the prosecutor to put the offence in context. The victim may, for example, have been subjected to repeated attacks and may be vulnerable if the prosecution does not proceed.
- 5.27** Some information might need to come from other sources, such as voluntary agencies. All this information must be collected by the police and given to the prosecutor.

6 Is it in the public interest to prosecute?

6.1 We always think very carefully about the interests and safety of the victim when we decide where the public interest lies. But we prosecute cases on behalf of the public at large and not just in the interests of any particular individual.

6.2 The safety of children and young people is paramount. If there are children living in a household where there is abuse, we will want to know about the effect it has on them. We will ask the police if the child or young person has shared any concerns with other agencies, or if other agencies have shared concerns with the police, especially where family proceedings are taking place.

6.3 If the victim withdraws support for the prosecution but we have enough evidence to proceed, we have to decide whether to prosecute. The safety of the victim and any children and young person will be a key factor for us to consider at this stage. Some examples of what helps us to decide whether it is in the public interest to prosecute are:

- the seriousness of the offence;
- the victim's injuries – whether physical or psychological;
- if the defendant used a weapon;
- if the defendant made any threats before or after the attack;
- if the defendant planned the attack;
- if there are any children living in the household;

- if the offence was committed in the presence of, or near, a child or young person;
- the chances of the defendant offending again;
- breaches of any court orders;
- the continuing threat to the health and safety of the victim or anyone else who is, or may become, involved;
- the history of the relationship, particularly if there has been any violence in the past;
- the defendant's criminal history, particularly any previous violence; and
- any other factors that are relevant to the public interest.

6.4 In cases of domestic violence, if the evidential stage is passed and the victim is willing to give evidence, we will almost always prosecute, even if, for example, the injury was minor or the parties have reconciled. Police guidance states that cautions by police officers are rarely appropriate in domestic violence cases.

6.5 We will ask the police to provide information about family circumstances and the likely effect of a prosecution on the victim, children and any young person. Social services, housing, IDVAs or specialist domestic violence support agencies may be able to help by providing the police with this type of information, if they are or have been involved.

7 Bail issues

- 7.1** Once a defendant is charged with an offence, the police will decide whether to release the person on bail or to keep the person in custody. If they are released on bail, they will be bailed to attend a court hearing within a short period of time. If they are kept in custody by the police, they will be brought before the next available court for a bail hearing.
- 7.2** At the bail hearing, the magistrates decide whether bail is appropriate after they have heard representations from both the prosecution and the defence. A defendant has a right to bail. The court can only refuse bail if it is satisfied that the defendant would fail to surrender to custody, commit an offence while on bail, or interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice. Bail can also be refused if the offence was committed whilst the defendant was already on bail for another serious offence, or for the defendant's own protection. There is an exception to the right to bail for some serious repeat offenders, including those previously convicted of rape. In those cases, the court can only grant bail in exceptional circumstances.
- 7.3** At the bail hearing, the police will provide sufficient information to prosecutors to enable a decision to be made whether to oppose bail for the defendant (for example, information setting out the fears of a victim or witness about harassment or repeat offending). The victim should pass any relevant information that may affect the question of bail to the police so it can be considered by the prosecutor at an early stage.

- 7.4** Where there has been a relationship between the victim and the defendant, the police will provide as much background information as possible. This might include such information as the number and ages of any children and the proximity of the addresses of the relations of the defendant to that of the victim. It will also include details of any civil orders in force and any other relevant information.
- 7.5** We are especially conscious of the importance of this information in cases where there are children or young people.
- 7.6** The prosecutor will take into account the Victim Personal Statement, if the victim has decided to make one, in making decisions whether or not to oppose bail, and what conditions could be agreed. In the Victim Personal Statement, the victim can choose to express any concerns about the defendant being granted bail.
- 7.7** We may decide to ask that the defendant be kept in custody to protect the victim or witnesses from the risk of danger, threats or pressure that might obstruct the course of justice.
- 7.8** Magistrates are required to give reasons in open court if they grant bail to a defendant. If they do not give reasons, we will ask them to state their reasons.
- 7.9** It is no longer possible to refuse bail in certain non-imprisonable summary offences.
- 7.10** In cases involving imprisonable offences, when the prosecutor opposes bail, but the magistrates grant bail, the prosecutor will make a decision whether or not to appeal that decision. If an appeal is made, the defendant will be

kept in custody until a judge at the Crown Court hears the appeal. No such appeal can be made for non-imprisonable offences.

- 7.11** To protect victims, children and other witnesses from the risk of danger, threats, pressure or other acts by the defendant that might obstruct the course of justice, we may ask the court to impose conditions of bail.
- 7.12** Conditions that the court can impose include a requirement not to make contact with any named person or to keep away from certain areas. Examples of other common bail conditions and what happens if bail conditions are breached are set out in Annex B. We will make sure that these conditions prioritise the safety of the victim and any children. We will also try to ensure that the victim retains as much freedom of movement as possible by curbing the ability of the defendant to approach or intimidate the victim, such as at home, work or on the way to school.
- 7.13** We will work closely with the police to obtain the views of victims and witnesses about bail conditions and any proposed variations to them. We will try to do this before a decision is made in respect to any proposed variation to the defendant's bail conditions. The victim or witness will be told by the police or the Witness Care Unit of any change to the bail conditions or custody status of the accused person (or it may be that this information comes to the victim through a support service with which the victim has been in contact). In the interests of safety, this should be done as soon as possible and we will ensure that contact is made via the means chosen by the victim.

- 7.14** If the defendant breaches bail conditions, the police should arrest them and the court can remand them in custody. New offences may have been committed in addition to the conditions being breached and any new offence will be reviewed to decide whether it should be prosecuted.
- 7.15** Where there is a condition not to contact the victim, it does not matter if the victim has agreed to or initiated any contact with the defendant. It is the defendant who is subject to the bail conditions. The defendant, and not the victim, is responsible for complying with any conditions imposed by the police or the court until released from those conditions by the police or court (see Annex B).

8 Deciding the charges and accepting pleas

8.1 The charges in domestic violence cases should reflect the seriousness of what took place, any element of pre-meditation or persistence in the defendant's behaviour, the provable intent of the defendant and the severity of any injury suffered by the victim. The charges must help us to present the case clearly and simply and they must give the court power to impose a suitable sentence.

8.2 The CPS and police have agreed "charging standards" for certain types of offences including assaults. These are guidelines that help us to make consistent decisions about the right charges. We use them when reviewing all cases, including domestic violence cases. The charging standard for offences against the person can be found on the CPS website at:

www.cps.gov.uk/legal/I_to_O/offences_against_the_person/

8.3 In some cases, we may consider accepting a guilty plea from the defendant to a different charge. This might arise, for example, because new evidence comes to light. A defendant may also plead guilty to some but not all of the charges made against them.

- 8.4** When considering whether to accept a plea in these instances, and, in accordance with our obligations under the 'Attorney General's Guidelines on the Acceptance of Pleas and the Prosecutor's Role in the Sentencing Exercise 2005' (revised 2007), we will discuss the situation with the victim or the victim's family wherever possible. We will explain the position and take into account their views in order to help us to make the right decision. We will keep them informed, either directly or indirectly through the police, and explain our decisions to them.
- 8.5** We will always take proper account of the victim's interests (either through consultation with the victim at court or through information from the police and the victim's statement), and we will not accept a guilty plea that is put forward upon a misleading or untrue set of facts.

9 **Avoiding delay**

- 9.1** The longer the delay, the longer the victim will be at risk and under pressure. In cases of domestic violence we will ensure that we do not contribute to undue delay when dealing with a case. We will do our best to ensure that the victim is kept informed, either by ourselves or through the police or support agencies, of the reason for any delay in the proceedings.
- 9.2** We continually work with our criminal justice partners to increase efficiency in progressing cases. Jointly with the police, we have established Witness Care Units to improve the service that victims and witnesses receive from us. As a result, trials are more likely to go ahead on the first date fixed by the court without the need for adjournments.

10 Civil proceedings

- 10.1** The needs of individual victims vary, and to ensure their safety, it is possible to use both the criminal and civil law. Whilst the CPS does not have a role in civil proceedings, our guidance advises prosecutors to be aware of the options open to victims and other agencies under civil procedures so that a comprehensive approach may be taken in safeguarding and supporting victims. When we are aware that criminal and civil proceedings are taking place at the same time, we will ensure that the courts have the appropriate information to enable them to make orders that prioritise the safety of victims, children and young people.
- 10.2** One possible civil remedy is a non-molestation order which is designed to prohibit a person from doing or continuing to do certain acts. The breach of a non-molestation order without a reasonable excuse has been a criminal offence since 1 July 2007. This change in the law has provided two options to the victim when a non-molestation order is breached: they may call the police, who will deal with the breach as a criminal offence; or they may choose to return to the civil court that made the non-molestation order for the breach to be dealt with as a contempt of court.
- 10.3** The CPS is responsible for prosecuting the breach of such orders where the victim calls the police and chooses to have the breach dealt with in the criminal courts. The CPS will not be able to prosecute the breach if it has already been dealt with as a contempt of court. However, if the CPS decides

not to prosecute, or if the offender is prosecuted but found not guilty, the victim may still ask a civil court to deal with the breach as a contempt of court. The CPS may still prosecute where the victim is taking other action in the civil courts.

11 Support and safety of victims

- 11.1** When victims and witnesses have to attend court to give evidence, we know that they may be worried and might need practical and emotional support. Ensuring the safety of domestic violence victims is also of critical importance to us.
- 11.2** In many areas, general and specialist support (including specialist support for minority communities) is available to victims, and this can continue throughout the life of the prosecution and beyond. Support may be available from the police, IDVAs and other support organisations. Initiatives, such as special measures meetings between the CPS and victims of domestic violence, and the creation of dedicated Witness Care Units staffed by CPS and police personnel, are all designed to increase the confidence of victims within the criminal justice system and to help them to give their best evidence.
- 11.3** We understand that victims' experiences of domestic violence and of the criminal justice system will be different, and that they will have individual needs and safety requirements, perhaps as a result of their ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, disability, immigration status, sexuality, religion or belief, socio-economic background or other identity. We recognise that these different experiences require specific responses from the CPS, and so we will do our best to ensure that support for victims is tailored to suit their needs (for example, by employing interpreters) and that appropriate referrals are made to other sources of support.

Specialist domestic violence services and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers

- 11.4** In some parts of England and Wales, IDVAs have begun to work with high risk victims. These professionally trained specialists will work alongside victims from the point of crisis, such as initial contact with emergency services, throughout the legal process and beyond. They are independent of the criminal justice system. The advisers link in with essential services, such as victim and witness organisations, counselling and health services, whilst ensuring the safety of the victim is coordinated across all agencies.
- 11.5** Additionally, general and specialist domestic violence support organisations exist throughout the country, including services for victims from minority communities. Contact details for some of these can be found at Annex C.

Witness Care Units

- 11.6** We have dedicated Witness Care Units in all CPS Areas, run jointly by the CPS and the police. Witness Care Officers provide a single point of contact and tailored support for each witness to ensure that they are able to give their best evidence. This tailored support is based on a needs assessment, which includes consideration of specialist support that an individual witness may need. This support can take the form of accredited interpreters for witnesses with hearing impairments or language difficulties; of enabling some older people to give their evidence whilst seated due to their frailty; or of allowing witnesses to give their evidence via a live link, to avoid the need for them to be physically present in court.

Witness Care Units may also have links to specialist support services for people with specific needs.

- 11.7** In domestic violence cases, the Witness Care Unit is not always the single point of contact for victims. CPS Areas should have agreed local protocols outlining the responsibilities of the Witness Care Unit and the police specialist domestic violence unit to ensure that the victim has a single point of contact. It is recommended that these protocols are wide enough to encompass all support agencies within the area.
- 11.8** Where the Witness Care Officer is the single point of contact, information and support will be provided to the victim from the point of charge right up until the conclusion of the case. The Witness Care Officer will liaise with the Witness Service to arrange pre-trial visits for witnesses to familiarise themselves with the court building. In some parts of the country, it may be agreed that the police officer or IDVA will keep the victim informed.

The Prosecutors' Pledge

- 11.9** The CPS has a ten point Prosecutors' Pledge that describes the level of service victims can expect to receive from prosecutors. The Prosecutors' Pledge ensures, amongst other things, that the specific needs of victims and witnesses are addressed; that they are assisted at court to refresh their memory from their written statement or video interview; and that they are protected from unwarranted or irrelevant attacks on their character.

- 11.10** The Prosecutors' Pledge can be obtained from CPS Communications Branch or from our website:

www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/prosecutor_pledge.html

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

- 11.11** This Code sets out the obligations of the CPS and other criminal justice agencies towards victims. One of these obligations is to ensure that we always introduce ourselves to victims and witnesses before conducting a trial.

- 11.12** Copies of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime can be obtained from our website:

www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/victims_code.pdf

- 11.13** Complaints can be made for breaches of the Victims' Code. For further information, see section 17 below.

Special measures

- 11.14** Giving evidence can be a particularly traumatic experience for victims of domestic violence. Some find it difficult to give evidence when they can see the defendant. In some cases, the court may agree to allow a witness to give evidence with the help of "special measures". Prosecutors have to apply for special measures in both the Crown Court and the magistrates' courts. The court makes the final decision about whether they will be granted but it must take into account the witness' view. The granting of a request for special measures by the court is not automatic. These measures are

designed to help the following witnesses (although not all types of special measures are available to all of these witnesses):

- children under 17 years;
- adults (17 and over for the purposes of this legislation) who may be considered vulnerable because of incapacity, such as a physical or mental disorder; and
- witnesses whose evidence is likely to be affected because they are intimidated.

11.15 Examples of special measures include:

- the use of screens in the courtroom to prevent the witness and the defendant seeing each other;
- the giving of evidence away from the courtroom through a live television link (but the defendant will often still be able to see the witness);¹
- the use of communication aids, for example, an alphabet board or hearing loop;
- the giving of evidence through an intermediary (see further below);
- the clearing of the public gallery in sexual offence cases or cases involving intimidation; and
- the playing to the court of the witness' video recorded statement, previously taken by the police during the investigation.²

¹ It may be possible to set up a remote live link where the victim or witness is physically unable to attend court or distressed about being in the same venue as the defendant.

² This special measure is available for children and vulnerable adults in the Crown Court, for victims in serious sexual offence cases in the Crown Court, and for child witnesses in need of special protection in the magistrates' courts.

- 11.16** The need for special measures should be investigated first by the police (drawing on information from the IDVA, where there is one) and then discussed with the prosecutor. The Witness Care Officer may also have an input following a needs assessment. The views of the victim and witnesses are taken into account, and it is important that the advantages and disadvantages of each of the available special measures are explained to the victim so that they can make an informed request.
- 11.17** Victims of sexual crimes are presumed to be eligible for specific special measures if they want them and they satisfy the statutory criteria. The situation is different for children or young people (aged under 17) as they will normally have to give their evidence by recorded video evidence and television link unless the court considers that it is not in the interests of justice for them to do so (for example, where the video recording contains technical faults, improper questions, or other material prejudicial to a fair trial; or if the child or young person expresses a direct wish not to use the special measure).
- 11.18** The court has to take certain things into account, for example, adult witness's views, when deciding whether to allow special measures. The court needs to be satisfied that the witness' evidence is likely to be of a lower quality without the special measures that are requested.
- 11.19** In deciding whether the quality of the evidence is likely to be diminished, the court will consider, among other things:
- the social and cultural background and ethnic origins of the witness;
 - the religion or beliefs of the witness;

- any behaviour towards the witness by the defendant or his or her family or associates.

11.20 This list is not exhaustive and the court can take account of anything else that is brought to its attention.

11.21 Decisions about whether special measures are required should be taken at the earliest opportunity, and ideally when decisions are made about whether to charge. However, circumstances may change or witnesses may change their mind and it is possible to apply for special measures at any stage of the proceedings.

Intermediaries for vulnerable witnesses

11.22 The use of an intermediary is another form of special measure and is available to children and adults who are considered vulnerable. An intermediary is someone who is approved by the court to provide a service that enables witnesses and the court to communicate. Professional intermediaries – usually speech and language therapists or deaf intermediaries who understand deaf culture – work with witnesses to make sure they are understood and can understand the questions put to them.

11.23 Intermediaries can work with defence or prosecution witnesses to assist in the initial taking of their evidence and when they are in court so that they can give their best evidence at trial. Intermediaries come from a range of backgrounds including social work, speech, language therapy and psychology. They will normally be a specialist by training or possibly through a unique knowledge of the witness.

Special measures meeting between the CPS and domestic violence victims and witnesses

- 11.24** Where we decide to make an application to the court for special measures and where appropriate, we will ask the police to find out if the witness would like to meet the prosecutor.
- 11.25** The purpose of such a meeting is to build trust and confidence and to enable us to reassure the witness that their needs will be taken into account. We will also try to offer such a meeting if we have decided not to apply for special measures so that we can explain that decision.
- 11.26** The witness does not have to attend this meeting unaccompanied. They can bring a relative, friend or other supporter. In order to facilitate communication with the victim, it may be appropriate for an interpreter or other similar person to attend the meeting. The victim may bring their own professional interpreter, or the CPS can provide one free of charge. We are aware of the need to use professional interpreters and to avoid using family members or friends. Where possible, we will ensure that the advocate who will be conducting the trial attends the meeting between the prosecutor and the witness. The prosecutor will also offer the witness a court familiarisation visit.

- 11.27** Further information about meetings with the CPS for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses is contained in the leaflet: “Witnesses, Your Meeting with the CPS Prosecutor”. This leaflet is available from our website:

www.cps.gov.uk/publications/prosecution/witnesseng.html

Pre-trial witness interviews

- 11.28** The CPS has introduced a scheme across England and Wales that enables the prosecutor to meet the victim or other witnesses at an early stage in the criminal process where the prosecutor considers this to be appropriate. These meetings are different from the special measures meetings described above. The purpose of pre-trial witness interviews is to enable the prosecutor to reach a better informed decision about any aspect of the case. We will consider every case carefully and sensitively. Our decisions will be objective but made within a framework that promotes support for victims by keeping them informed.

CPS support for victims and witnesses at court

- 11.29** The CPS is fully committed to taking all practicable steps to help victims and witnesses through the often difficult experience of becoming involved in the criminal justice process.
- 11.30** When a witness attends court, the CPS prosecutor presenting the case or the associate prosecutor or caseworker will introduce themselves and answer any general queries that a witness may have. They are not permitted to discuss the detail of the case with a witness.

- 11.31** Initiatives, such as special measures, meetings between the CPS and vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, and the creation of dedicated Witness Care Units staffed by CPS and police personnel, are all designed to increase the confidence of the witness within the criminal justice system. Support is also available at a very early stage from police and other support agencies which can continue throughout the life of the prosecution and beyond.
- 11.32** We will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to have an interpreter available for the court proceedings when one is needed.
- 11.33** Sometimes, the person prosecuting may be a barrister (also known as counsel) or a solicitor who is not a member of the CPS but who has been instructed by us to present the case in court. The CPS will ensure that every barrister or solicitor we instruct is familiar with our policies and procedures and acts in accordance with them.
- 11.34** If witnesses are kept waiting at court, we will make sure they are told the reasons for the delay and the estimated time when they will be required to give evidence.
- 11.35** Wherever possible, we will try, through the Witness Service or the IDVA, to make sure that separate entrances, exits and accommodation facilities are made available for prosecution witnesses so that they do not have to mix with the defendant or his or her friends or family.

- 11.36** The CPS will pay reasonable expenses to a witness – including childcare and travel – for attending court.
- 11.37** A witness who has made a written statement can read that statement to refresh the witness memory before giving evidence. Where the evidence has been recorded on video and is to be used as evidence-in-chief, arrangements will be made for witnesses to refresh their memory by watching the video recording before the hearing.

Victim Personal Statements

- 11.38** All victims of crime should be offered an opportunity by the police to make a Victim Personal Statement. If they have not, they can speak to their Witness Care Unit or other support service to ask for arrangements to be made so that they can make one. This is distinct from a statement made to the police describing the incident. It is a statement by a victim of crime explaining the effect that the crime has had on them.
- 11.39** In the Statement, victims can describe how they have been affected by the crime. They can talk about their wishes or needs during the case and any concerns they may have as a result of the offence, for example, about safety, intimidation or the defendant's bail status. They can mention their support (or absence of support) for the prosecution and any requests they have for help from any of the support agencies. In this way, the court can better understand not only the crime but also the context in which it occurred and its effects and consequences.

11.40 The statement is optional, and the victim should be asked whether or not they wish to make such a statement or if they need help to make a statement from a support worker or family member. This statement can be made at any time and it is possible to make more than one statement.

11.41 A leaflet is available that explains what Victim Personal Statements are and how they can be used. Copies of the leaflet can be obtained from the CPS Communications Branch or found on the Home Office website at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/victimstate.pdf

11.42 We will take account of any information contained in a Victim Personal Statement and we will tell the court about the effects of the crime on the victim. We can also use these statements to help make decisions about cases, for example when deciding whether or not to ask the court to refuse bail or to impose bail conditions.

The Witness Service

11.43 Magistrates' courts and Crown Court centres have a Witness Service. This is a service provided by Victim Support. More information on this service can be found from the local police or local Victim Support office. Some courts also have a Young Witness Service.

11.44 Members of the Witness Service are able to arrange pre-court familiarisation visits if desired and are able to explain what might happen at court. They are not, however, allowed to discuss the details of cases.

11.45 When a witness is concerned and worried about going to court and giving evidence, a member of the Witness Service may be permitted to accompany the witness into court, to give support. If the witness has had support from other agencies a member of that support service (for example, Women's Aid or an IDVA) may also be permitted to accompany the witness into court.

Reporting restrictions

11.46 In some cases, the law allows us to apply for an order preventing the reporting of certain details of witnesses in the media that may lead to their identification.

11.47 The court must follow a specified procedure when considering such an application and must decide whether a witness is eligible and whether the reporting restriction will be likely to improve the quality of the witness' evidence or the level of the witness' cooperation.

11.48 When deciding whether a witness is eligible, the court will look at whether the quality of the witness' evidence or the level of cooperation will be diminished because of fear or distress associated with being identified by members of the public as a witness in the proceedings. It will also take into account factors such as the circumstances of the offence, the witness's age, and behaviour towards the witness by the defendant or his or her associates. The court may also consider the witness' fear of being 'outed', if the victim is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

- 11.49** Once these factors are considered, the court will determine whether it would be in the interests of justice to make an order, bearing in mind that it may be in the public interest to avoid substantial restrictions on the reporting of proceedings.
- 11.50** Media representatives have the right to object to a court order that prohibits publication of this information.
- 11.51** Where an order is made, the effect will be that no matter relating to the witness during his or her lifetime shall be included in any publication if it is likely to identify him or her as a witness in the proceedings.

12 Children

- 12.1** We recognise that exposure to domestic violence can have a devastating effect on children and young people. Children and young people can be victims themselves; they can be witnesses to domestic violence; or they can be affected by domestic violence simply because it takes place in the house where they live. If the police tell us that there is a child or young person involved, it could affect our view of the seriousness of an offence. It is also information we can give to the court so that it will know the impact that a crime has had on a child or young person. This may be relevant when a defendant is sentenced.
- 12.2** Prosecutors will take the rights and interests of children and young people into account at all stages of domestic violence cases. We will always think about what is best for children and young people in these cases. The safety and physical and emotional well-being of children are critical issues for those making decisions in cases of domestic violence.
- 12.3** We realise that there is a danger that children and young people can become victims for a second time during criminal cases because of how they are treated. Prosecutors will work hard to prevent this happening. It is also possible for children and young victims to make a Victim Personal Statement, describing the effect the crime had on them.
- 12.4** When children and young people are witnesses, we will make sure that they are well supported and able to give their evidence in court with as little stress and anxiety as possible. We recognise that children and young people have

particular needs and wishes. We are aware that Victim Support can provide enhanced witness services for children and young people at court and encourages referrals to it in such cases.

- 12.5** For further details about how we will deal with cases involving children and young people as victims and witnesses, see *Children and Young People: CPS policy on prosecuting criminal cases involving children and young people as victims and witnesses*. This can be obtained from the CPS Communications Branch or found at:

www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/children_policy.pdf

- 12.6** Booklets are also available to inform children and young people about what will happen if they report a crime. There is a young witness pack and copies of *Millie the witness* and *Jerome: a witness in court* are available from the CPS Communications Branch or the CPS website at:

www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/further_info.html

Pre-Trial therapy

- 12.7** The best interests of witnesses are paramount, especially so when children or young people have been subjected to or have witnessed domestic violence. The child or young person should not feel unable to seek assistance because they (or those caring for them) believe receiving such therapy may undermine a prosecution. In fact, many forms of therapy will not have any adverse impact on the criminal case.

- 12.8** Whether a witness should receive therapy before a criminal trial is not a decision for the police or CPS. It is for the person or their carer, in conjunction with the professional agencies providing support, to decide whether or not to undertake therapy.
- 12.9** It is important however, that the police and the CPS are informed that therapy is either proposed, or being undertaken.
- 12.10** Full Guidance can be found in *Provision of Therapy for Child Witnesses Prior to a criminal trial (practice Guidance)* published in 2001 and in: *Provision of Therapy for Vulnerable or Intimated Adult Witnesses prior to a Criminal trial (Practise Guidance)* published in 2002. Both of these documents can be found at:
www.cps.gov.uk and
www.homeoffice.gov.uk

13 Keeping victims informed

- 13.1** The safety issues relevant to domestic violence cases make it important for victims to be kept informed about the progress of a case. Under the Victims' Code, Witness Care Units are responsible for letting victims and witnesses know about dates of court hearings or other important case developments where they are the single point of contact for the victim. Witness Care Units will make contact with a victim according to the wishes of the victim. This can include: by letter; by telephone; by text; or through a third party. In relation to domestic violence victims, this should be done within one working day of receiving the date from the court. We recognise that in domestic violence cases it is often important to make sure that victims are informed as soon as possible.
- 13.2** We are aware that some victims may prefer to nominate a friend, family member, IDVA or other member of the voluntary services to act as their point of contact, and we are happy to accommodate this.
- 13.3** Witness Care Officers will provide information and support to the victim from the point of charge right up until the conclusion of the case where they are the single point of contact for the victim.

14 Specialist domestic violence courts

14.1 In some parts of England and Wales, domestic violence cases will be heard in specialist domestic violence courts (SDVCs). These courts represent a partnership approach to domestic violence by the police, prosecutors, court staff, the probation service and specialist support services for victims. SDVCs provide a specialised way of dealing with domestic violence cases in the magistrates' courts. Specialist courts are not held in separate court buildings, but generally have:

- tailored support and advice for victims from IDVAs;
- domestic violence cases clustered on a particular day or fast-tracked through the system;
- specially trained magistrates and prosecutors; and
- separate entrances, exits and waiting areas so that victims do not come into contact with defendants.

14.2 Agencies work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases, to support victims of domestic violence and to increase information sharing, so that more offenders are brought to justice.

15 Sentencing

- 15.1** When a defendant pleads guilty or is found guilty, the court has to decide the sentence to impose and can choose from a broad range of penalties. Magistrates' sentencing guidelines state that an abuse of trust in a domestic setting is an aggravating factor in assaults, and "vulnerable" victims are also an aggravating feature. Crown Court judges will consider relevant case law and sentencing guidelines published by the Sentencing Guidelines Council. The sentence may be in the form of a rehabilitative order, a community penalty, fines, or custody. The court can require an offender to attend a domestic abuse perpetrator programme which is run by the Probation Service. The aim of the perpetrator programme is to enhance the safety of victims, by helping perpetrators change their behaviour and develop respectful and non-abusive relationships.
- 15.2** The prosecution has a duty actively to assist the court with the law and guidelines on sentencing. The prosecutor must also be alert to arguments in mitigation that detract from the character of a witness, and challenge anything which is misleading, untrue or unfair.
- 15.3** Before sentencing, the judge or magistrates may request the preparation of pre-sentence reports. The Probation Service will prepare these and they will be used to assist in sentencing decisions. We will provide the Probation Service with such information as they need to prepare the reports that the court requires.

- 15.4** We will make sure that the court has all the information it needs to sentence appropriately. We will advise the Court of any Victim Personal Statement so that it can understand the effect of the crime upon the victim. In this way, we will ensure that the court is able to come to an informed decision regarding sentence. We will also consider carefully any sentence that is passed to make sure that it reflects the crime.
- 15.5** We will give the court information to help it to decide whether to make any orders it has power to make in addition to the main sentence. This includes making orders in appropriate cases for compensation for loss, injury or damage, and making restraining orders³ or anti-social behaviour orders.
- 15.6** Before being sentenced, a defendant is entitled to make a plea in mitigation. We will challenge defence mitigation that unfairly attacks the victim's character.
- 15.7** If the defendant pleads guilty to an offence but disagrees with the prosecution version of events, the court has to decide on which version to sentence. In order to do this, the court may hold a 'Newton hearing', The court will only hold such a hearing if it feels that there would be a substantial difference in sentence if the defendant were to be sentenced on the prosecution's version of events. If there would be no substantial difference to the sentence, the defendant is sentenced on his account.

³ At present, these are only available in certain harassment cases. However, s.12 Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (not yet in force) includes provisions to extend this to all offences both on conviction and in some circumstances on acquittal.

- 15.8** If the court feels that it would make a substantial difference, the court can hear evidence from both parties and it can make a decision based on representations from both the defence and the prosecution. At the end of the hearing, the judge must say the prosecution has proved its version of events beyond reasonable doubt.
- 15.9** If a judge in the Crown Court passes a sentence which the prosecution considers is unduly lenient, in that it does not reflect the seriousness of the offence, the CPS will ask the Attorney General to review the sentence. However, this procedure only applies to a limited range of offences (for example, sexual offences and cruelty to children). The application to the Court of Appeal must be made within 28 days of the sentence. The Court of Appeal decides whether or not the sentence is unduly lenient and, if it is, whether to increase the sentence.
- 15.10** If the prosecution does not consider the sentence unduly lenient but the victim disagrees, the victim can ask the Attorney General to consider it, but this has to be done within 28 days of the sentencing decision. If the CPS decides not to submit the case for the consideration of the Attorney General, we must notify the complainant without delay so that the complainant's option of complaining directly to the Attorney General is preserved, and the Attorney General will have sufficient time, if a complaint is made, to consider the case.
- 15.11** If the Attorney General thinks that the sentence is unduly lenient, the Attorney General can refer it to the Court of Appeal.

15.12 We will, through the Witness Care Unit (or other single point of contact, for example, a police officer) keep victims informed of any appeals by the defence against conviction and sentence (see section 6 of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime). The Witness Care Unit or the police will also inform victims if a defendant is granted bail following a successful application for leave to appeal, or where an appeal is granted.

16 Community engagement

- 16.1** As part of our commitment to improving the service we offer, we engage with communities to understand their concerns and explain what we do. The publication of this policy statement is an important step towards achieving this goal. We have consulted widely in its preparation and will keep it under review after publication. We will put the policy into practice and monitor our prosecutions of domestic violence with community partners through Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels. By including people in this way, we hope to make sure that our service meets the needs of local communities and to build the trust of these communities in the work we do and the decisions we make.
- 16.2** We are already working locally to deepen links with representative groups and individuals. This helps us to explain the policy statement and how we expect it to operate in the criminal justice system. We will answer questions about the CPS and the criminal justice system frankly and without raising false expectations about what can be offered.

17 Complaints

17.1 Anyone who has a complaint about the way they have been treated by the CPS, or who feels that the criminal justice system has let them down and does not know who may be responsible, may write to the Chief Crown Prosecutor for the CPS Area where they live. The CPS has a complaints policy, and a leaflet describing the procedure to follow can be obtained from the local CPS office. Contact details for each of the CPS Areas can be found at:

www.cps.gov.uk/local/index.html

17.2 Any complaints regarding the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime and the Prosecutors' Pledge should be referred initially to the CPS to be dealt with under our complaints procedures. If the person remains dissatisfied, they may ask their Member of Parliament to refer the case to the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

17.3 Specialist support organisations or IDVAs may be able to help victims to make complaints. Alternatively, anyone who has a complaint may wish to seek legal advice on what options are available.

18 Conclusion

- 18.1** We are determined to play our part in stopping domestic violence and in bringing offenders to justice. We are committed to improving the way cases of domestic violence are dealt with in the criminal justice system and we want victims and witnesses to have confidence in the way in which we review and progress cases.
- 18.2** We recognise and welcome the invaluable advice, emotional support and practical help and information that may be offered to victims and witnesses by specialist domestic violence support organisations and DVA. This support has been shown to help victims and witnesses remain confident and able to continue with the case.
- 18.3** We will continue to work with the police and other colleagues in the criminal justice system and the voluntary and community sector at national and local levels to help us develop best practice.
- 18.4** We will monitor the way we deal with cases of domestic violence and publish this information on the CPS website.

- 18.5** We will review this policy statement regularly so that it reflects current law and thinking. We welcome any comments and observations that help us to do this. Comments and suggestions should be sent to the Policy Directorate, CPS, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London SE1 9HS or HQPolicy@cps.gsi.gov.uk
- 18.6** This policy statement is available in other languages and alternative formats. To request a copy, please contact the CPS Communications Branch. Contact details are printed on the back cover of this document.

GLOSSARY

Adjournment

The postponement of the hearing of a case until a future date.

Appeal

A request for a higher court to change a decision made by a lower court.

Bail

The release of a person held in custody while awaiting trial or appealing against a criminal conviction.

Charge

When a suspect is formally accused of committing a crime.

Civil Proceedings

These are non-criminal proceedings that usually take place in the County or High Court. Applications for non-molestation orders, divorce proceedings, child contact and residence are all examples of civil proceedings.

Code for Crown Prosecutors

A document that sets out how the CPS makes decisions about cases. It is widely available to the public from any of our offices, and it is on the internet at:

www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/code.html.

Complainant

A person who alleges a crime has been committed against them.

Conviction

A decision by magistrates or a jury that the defendant is guilty.

Cross-examination

Challenging the evidence given by a witness in court.

Crown Court

A court where criminal cases are dealt with by a judge and a jury of twelve members of the public. The cases heard in the Crown Court are those likely to attract higher sentences (for example, rape, grievous bodily harm and murder). The Crown Court also deals with appeals for cases dealt with by the magistrates' and youth courts.

Defendant

A person charged with a criminal offence.

Evidence

The information given to the court to help make it to make a decision about whether or not a defendant is guilty. 'Evidence-in-chief' is the evidence presented to the court during the examination-in-chief.

Examination-in-chief

The questioning of the witness by the party who called him or her. Prosecution witnesses will be questioned first by the prosecution, before being cross-examined by the defence.

Hate Crime Scrutiny Panels

Panels involving criminal justice and community partners to scrutinise hate crime cases – including domestic violence – that have gone through the criminal justice system. These panels exist in all CPS Areas.

Intermediary

An intermediary is a person specifically trained to help children and adults who are considered vulnerable to be able to communicate at the police station and at court.

Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA)

An independent specialist who works alongside victims from the point of crisis, throughout the legal process, and beyond. They link in with essential services such as victim and witness support organisations, counselling, health and housing, whilst making sure that agencies to coordinate to keep the victim safe.

Magistrates' court

A court where criminal cases are dealt with by magistrates or district judges. Magistrates' courts tend to deal with cases that attract a lower sentence, such as common assault and criminal damage.

Newton hearing

The court may decide to hold a 'Newton hearing' where the defendant pleads guilty, but the defence and prosecution dispute the facts upon which the court is going to sentence the defendant. The purpose of the hearing is to establish the factual basis for the sentence to be passed.

Non-Molestation Orders

This is a court order addressed to a particular person that prohibits that person from doing or continuing to do certain acts. Typically it prevents that person from causing harm to another named individual.

Perpetrator programme

Domestic violence perpetrator programmes are structured programmes for domestic violence perpetrators. The programmes

involve: group sessions with the perpetrator; contact with known victims and the perpetrator's current partner; inter-agency risk assessment and risk management; and proactive offender management. The aim of these programmes is to increase the safety of the victim and children by holding the perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

Plea

When a defendant says he or she is guilty or not guilty.

Prosecutor

The person who presents the case against one or more defendants. Prosecutors present cases on behalf of the Crown (in other words, the state) and do not act on behalf of victims.

Re-examination

This involved the questioning of a witness in court by the person who originally called him or her to give evidence. It follows cross-examination.

Special measures

The help for witnesses that a court can offer so that they can give their best evidence in court. They include: live video links, video-recorded statements, screens around the witness box, and assistance with communication.

Statutory charging

The system through which the CPS has responsibility for deciding (in all but the most minor cases) whether a suspect should be charged, and, if so, what the charge(s) should be.

Trial

This occurs after a defendant has entered a not guilty plea or refuses to enter a plea. The magistrates or jury hear what

happened from the prosecution and defence, so that they can make up their minds about whether or not the defendant is guilty.

Victim

A person who has had a crime committed against them.

Witness

A person who can give relevant evidence in a criminal case. This will usually include the victim of a crime.

Witness Care Unit

Run by the police and CPS, Witness Care Units provide help and information for victims and prosecution witnesses.

Witness summons

A court order to an individual to appear in court at a specified place and time.

Annex A

Here are some examples of types of behaviour that can occur in cases of domestic violence and which MIGHT amount to a criminal offence.

Whether any particular behaviour does amount to a criminal offence will always depend on the circumstances of the particular case. These examples should therefore be treated only as guidelines.

* If the threatening or disorderly words/behaviour are used in a dwelling house, the offence can only be committed if the other person is not inside that or another dwelling.

** Actual physical or mental harm must be proved to have resulted from the behaviour.

Examples of behaviour	Possible offences
Pressuring a victim/witness to "drop the case" or not to give evidence.	Witness intimidation, obstructing the course of justice, conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.
Physical violence, with or without weapons, inc: punching, slapping, pushing, kicking, headbutting, and hair pulling.	Common assault, actual/grievous bodily harm, wounding, attempted murder.
Violence resulting in death.	Murder, manslaughter.

Examples of behaviour	Possible offences
Violence resulting in miscarriage.	Child destruction, procuring a miscarriage or abortion.
Choking, strangling, suffocating.	Common assault, actual/grievous bodily harm, attempting to choke, strangle or suffocate.
Spitting at a person.	Common assault.
Threatening with an article used as a weapon e.g. a knife, tool, telephone, chair.	Threats to kill, common assault, affray, threatening behaviour.
Throwing articles, e.g. crockery, even if they miss their target.	Common assault, actual/grievous bodily harm, wounding, criminal damage, affray, threatening behaviour.
Tying someone up.	Common assault, actual bodily harm, false imprisonment.
Threatening to kill someone.	Threats to kill, harassment.
Threats to cause injury.	Common assault, affray, threatening behaviour*.
Threats seriously to damage or undermine social status.	Harassment, blackmail.
Damaging or destroying property or threatening to damage or destroy property.	Criminal damage, threatening to cause criminal damage, harassment

Examples of behaviour	Possible offences
Harming or threatening to harm a pet.	Criminal damage, threatening to cause criminal damage, cruelty to animals, harassment.
Locking someone in a room or house or preventing him or her from leaving.	False imprisonment, harassment.
Preventing someone from visiting relatives or friends.	False imprisonment, kidnapping, harassment.
Preventing someone from seeking aid, e.g. medical attention.	False imprisonment, actual bodily harm.
Preventing someone from dressing as they choose or forcing them to wear a particular make-up, jewellery and hairstyles.	Actual bodily harm**, harassment.
Racial abuse.	Racially aggravated threatening behaviour*, disorderly conduct* or harassment.
"Outing", e.g. sexual orientation or HIV status.	Harassment, actual bodily harm**, blackmail.
Enforced financial dependence or unreasonably depriving someone of money.	Harassment.

Examples of behaviour	Possible offences
Abuse related to dowry demand.	Blackmail, harassment, common assault, actual/grievous bodily harm.
Unreasonable financial demands.	Blackmail, harassment.
Forced marriage.	Kidnap, blackmail, false imprisonment, common assault, actual/grievous bodily harm, rape, sexual assault.
Enforced sexual activity.	Rape, indecent assault, harassment, living off immoral earnings.
Persistent verbal abuse, e.g. constant unreasonable criticism.	Harassment, actual bodily harm**.
Breaching the conditions of a non-molestation order.	Breach of non-molestation order.
Offensive/obscene/menacing telephone calls, text messages or letters.	Improper use of public telecommunication systems, malicious communications, actual/grievous bodily harm **, harassment.
Excessive contact, e.g. numerous 'phone calls to check someone's whereabouts.	Harassment, false imprisonment.

Examples of behaviour	Possible offences
Secret or enforced administration of drugs.	Common assault, actual bodily harm, grievous bodily harm, administering poison.
Neglecting, abandoning or ill-treating a child.	Child cruelty.
"Honour crimes".	Murder, aiding and abetting suicide.
Female Circumcision.	Female Genital Mutilation.
Forcing entry into a house.	Using violence to secure entry.

Annex B

Bail

A court can remand a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached. Before the first court hearing, the police can also retain a defendant in custody or grant bail, with or without conditions attached, but their powers to do so are more limited than the court's. Conditions can only be imposed to ensure that the defendant attends the next court hearing, commits no new offences in the meantime, and does not interfere with any witnesses or obstruct the course of justice.

Examples of bail conditions imposed by courts

A court can impose any condition that seems appropriate in the circumstances of the particular case. Here are some examples of typical bail conditions imposed by courts:

- **the defendant must not contact, either directly or indirectly, a named person or persons, for example the victim and any children.**

This means no contact whatsoever, including by telephone, text, email, fax or letter or through another person, e.g. the defendant cannot get a relative to make contact on his behalf.

- **the defendant must not go to a named place, for example the victim's place of work, shopping area or children's school.**

This is usually a specific address, but may also be a street, a town, an area or even a whole county. It can include schools, doctors' surgeries, and addresses of family and friends. Sometimes the court will say that the defendant must not go within a specified

distance of a place, e.g. within half a mile of Victoria Road. Sometimes, for practical reasons, there are exceptions attached to the condition, for example:

- **the defendant must not go to a named place except:**

- to attend court;
- to see a solicitor by prior appointment;
- once to collect personal belongings at an appointed time and accompanied by a police officer or other specified person;
- to see the children, under supervision, at a specified time (the Family Court will usually be involved in assessing and making such arrangements).

- **the defendant must reside at a named address.**

This means live and sleep each night there.

- **the defendant must report to a named police station on a given day or days at a given time.**

For example, every weekday morning between 8.30am and 10.00 am

- **the defendant must abide by a curfew between certain specified hours.**

This means remain indoors, for example, from 9pm until 8am.

- **the defendant must provide a security to the court.**

If it is thought that the defendant might not attend the next court hearing, the court can order that a set sum of money be paid into the court. If the defendant does fail to attend the next hearing then the money can be forfeited.

- **the defendant must provide a surety.**

A friend or relative must agree to ensure that the defendant attends court, or the friend or relative could lose a specified sum of money

- **the defendant must wear an electronic tag.**

This condition is only available for adults or children who have reached the age of twelve years and are charged with or have been convicted of a violent or sexual offence. The tagging should ensure that any breaches are recorded and monitored by a security company who will then notify the police immediately. Breaches may result in arrest and the possibility of a remand into custody.

Breaching bail conditions

If the defendant breaches bail conditions, the police can arrest the defendant and the court can remand the defendant in custody.

Sometimes, despite bail conditions that say, for example, a defendant cannot contact the victim or return home, the victim contacts the defendant or invites or allows the defendant to return home.

There are all kinds of reasons why victims sometimes do this, but if the defendant responds in such a way as to continue the contact, then the defendant is breaching bail conditions because the police or the court have not released the defendant from the conditions of bail they imposed.

It does not matter that the victim has agreed to or initiated the contact; the victim is not subject to the bail conditions, the defendant is. The defendant is responsible for complying with any conditions imposed by the police or the court until released from those conditions by the police or court.

In addition to the breach of bail, new offences may also have been committed for which the defendant may be prosecuted.

Annex C

Listed below are contact details for some of the national organisations that provide help or information to victims of domestic violence. They should be able to give contact details for local organisations.

24-hour Domestic Violence Helpline

The confidential 24-hour national domestic violence freephone helpline is run in partnership by Refuge and Women's Aid. The helpline provides support, information and a listening ear to women experiencing (or who have experiences) domestic abuse and to those seeking help on a woman's behalf and, if appropriate, refer callers on to refuges and other sources of help and information.

The 24-hour free phone number is: 0808 2000 247

Broken Rainbow

Broken Rainbow provides assistance to lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Britain who are affected by homophobic, transphobic and same sex domestic violence.

Broken Rainbow Hotline Number: 0845 260 4460

Email: mail@broken-rainbow.org.uk

ChildLine

ChildLine is the free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK about any problem, day or night.

Tel: 0800 1111

MALE (Men's Advice Line)

A confidential helpline for men who experience violence from their partners or ex-partners.

Tel: 0808 801 0327

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Web: www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Action on Elder Abuse

Action on Elder Abuse works to protect and prevent the abuse of vulnerable older adults.

Astral House

1268 London Road

London SW16 4ER

Tel: 0808 808 8141

Email: enquiries@elderabuse.org.uk

Web: www.elderabuse.org.uk

IMKAAN

A national charity providing strategic and targeted organisational support to refuges serving the needs of Asian women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Tindlemanor

4th Floor

52 – 54 Featherstone Street

London EC1Y 8RT

Tel: 0207 250 3933

Email: admin@imkaan.org.uk

NSPCC National Child Protection Helpline

Helpline for people concerned about a child at risk of abuse, including children themselves. Offers counselling, information and advice about the care of children, legal issues, sexual, physical or emotional abuse, neglect etc.

The helpline is a free and confidential service that is open 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Tel: 0808 800 5000

Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

National Association of Gypsy Women

Support group for Gypsy women and travellers experiencing domestic violence.

Meadow View

Goldsmith Drive

Rayleigh

Essex SS6 9R5

Tel: 01268 782 792

Refuge

Refuge is the national charity for women and children who experience domestic violence. It is the UK's largest single provider of specialist accommodation and support to women and children escaping domestic violence.

4th Floor, International House

1 St Katherine's Way

London E1W 1UN

Tel: 020 7395 7700

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Email: info@refuge.org.uk

Web: www.refuge.org.uk

Respect

Respect is a UK-wide membership organisation for practitioners and organisations working with perpetrators of domestic violence and associated work with women partners and ex-partners. Respect's key focus is on increasing the safety of those experiencing domestic violence through promoting intervention with perpetrators.

1st Floor Downstream Building
1 London Bridge
London SE1 9BG

Tel: 020 7022 1801

Email: info@respect.uk.net

Web: www.respect.uk.net

Victim Support

Victim Support is the independent national charity that helps people to cope with the effects of crime. It provides free and confidential support and information to help victims deal with their experiences.

Victim Support line: 0845 30 30 900

Email: supportline@victimsupport.org.uk

Witness Service

Victim Support runs the witness service in every criminal court in England and Wales to give information and support to witnesses, victims, their families and friends when they go to court.

National Office

Cranmer House

39 Brixton Road

London SW9 6DZ

Tel: 0207 735 9166

Fax: 0207 582 5712

Email: contact@victimsupport.org.uk

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a key national charity working in England to end domestic violence of women and children. It supports a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK.

PO Box 391

Bristol BS99 7WS

Tel: 0117 944 4411

Fax: 0117 924 1703

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Email: info@womensaid.org.uk; helpline@womensaid.org.uk

Welsh Women's Aid

Women's Aid is a key national charity working in Wales to end domestic violence of women and children. It supports a network of over 500 domestic and sexual violence services across the UK.

Welsh Women's Aid

38-48 Crwys Road

Cardiff CF24 4NN

Tel: 029 2039 0874

Wales Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 801 0800

Web: www.welshwomensaid.org

CAADA (Coordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse)

CAADA is working to create a consistent, professional and effective response for all victims of domestic violence in particular those at high risk. They deliver accredited training for IDVAs and MARACs nationally and have developed accredited IDVA standards for IDVA services. They offer ongoing support for those they have trained.

CAADA

6th Floor

Market House

Baldwin Street

Bristol

Tel: 0117 3178750

Fax: 0117 3763364



This is a public document.

Information about alternative languages and formats is available from:

**CPS Communication Division
Rose Court
2 Southwark Bridge
London SE1 9HS
Email: publicity.branch@cps.gsi.gov.uk**

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www.cps.gov.uk

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