# Specialist Domestic Violence Courts Review 2007-08

# JUSTICE WITH SAFETY

**MARCH 2008**

**SPECIALIST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS REVIEW 2007/08**
**JUSTICE WITH SAFETY**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## E1. INTRODUCTION

E1.1 Specialist Domestic Violence Courts represent a partnership approach to domestic violence by the police, prosecutors, court staff, the probation service and specialist support services for victims. Magistrates sitting in these courts are fully aware of the approach and have received additional training. These court systems provide a specialised way of dealing with domestic violence cases in magistrates' courts. They refer to the approach of a whole system, rather than simply a court building or jurisdiction. Agencies work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases, support victims of domestic violence and share information better so that more offenders are brought to justice.

E1.2 The SDVC Programme commenced in April 2006 identifying the first 23 individual SDVC systems[1]. A National Resource Manual[2] outlining the recommended core components of an SDVC[3] was published in March 2006 to aid consistency of service delivery in SDVCs. A further 39 SDVCs were selected in April 2007, bringing the total number to 64.

E1.3 This report outlines the findings of a review of the first 23 SDVCs. The review aimed to:

1. Assess the performance of SDVCs and develop a better understanding of the key components needed to deliver the measures of success;
2. Identify barriers to delivery and good practice in relation to operating an SDVC; and,
3. Inform the ongoing development of the SDVC Programme including a review of the core components and the subsequent updating of the National Resource Manual.

E1.5 The review also attempted to assess the extent to which the first tranche of SDVCs are operating to the standards outlined in the National Resource Manual by issuing each of the 23 SDVCs with a questionnaire asking about their practice and processes to gain a better understanding of how the core components of a SDVC are being implemented. A separate document provides data from the questionnaires completed by the SDVCs which is available from the National Specialist Domestic Violence Court Programme Steering Group[4].

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[1] Listed in Annex A

[2] Link to the SDVC Resource Manual: www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence59.htm

[3] An outline of the core components is available in Annex B

[4] The National Specialist Domestic Violence Court Steering Group comprises officials from the Inter-Personal Violence Team at the Home Office (0207 035 3273); The Domestic Violence Implementation Team at the Crown Prosecution Service (0207 796 8687); the Courts Innovation Branch and the Family Justice Division within Her Majesty's Courts Service (0115 9558136 and 0207 210 8796 respectively).

E1.4   The review comprised three elements:

1. Data analysis[5] of the 23 SDVCs to obtain headline data across all SDVCs;
2. A postal survey of all the 23 SDVCs; and,
3. In depth analysis of six SDVCs (selection being based on their performance) which included court observations, focus groups and individual interviews with key SDVC representatives which helped to indicate the most significant components for delivering success measures.

## E2   MEASURES OF SUCCESS

E2.1   For the purpose of the review, it was decided to measure the SDVCs against the 2005-08 Criminal Justice System (CJS) Public Service Agreements (PSAs) as measures of success:

- *Bringing more perpetrators to justice*
- *Improving the support, safety and satisfaction of victims*
- *Increasing public confidence in CJS.*

E2.2   Prior to the review, the most reliable data available was that relating to offenders brought to justice, supplied by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). This review provided an opportunity to also look in more detail at support and safety for victims. The emphasis was therefore on the delivery of both justice and safety.

## E3   MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE 23 SDVCs

E3.1   The following findings represent data analysed from **all** 23 SDVCs. The review then carried out investigations to analyse, where possible, which components were involved in delivering these measures of success.

### E3.2   Bringing more perpetrators to justice

- The police data indicated a high level of domestic violence crimes being arrested: an average of over 80% for the SDVCs where the data was available[6].
- Of the 23 SDVC systems, ten achieved over 70% successful prosecutions. This was generally better than the non-SDVCs within their wider CPS Areas.
- The ten SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes also had the least cases discontinued and were among the least with no evidence being offered at trial.
- One of the courts achieved over 80% successful prosecutions.
- The average for SDVC successful outcomes was 66% compared with their corresponding CPS Area average of 64%.

### E3.3   Improving the support, safety and satisfaction of victims

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[5] Crown Prosecution Service data was analysed for all SDVCs. In addition data from police, courts, probation Independent DV Advisors and voluntary sector perpetrator programmes was analysed where available.
[6] 19 SDVCs provided some police data, of which 11 included data on crimes and arrests.

- Just under six thousand victim[7] referrals were made to Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA)[8] services linked to the SDVC systems: an average of 269 referrals per IDVA service; a high level of referrals over a six month period.
- Just under three-quarters (74%) of clients involved in the court process were supported by IDVAs at court. This is particularly encouraging as the IDVA service is the first service developed to support victims of domestic violence both *within* and outside the CJS.
- Just under two-thirds (60%) of total referrals nationally were at very high or high risk of significant harm. Just under half of all referrals (43%) at very high risk (VHR).
- The number of cases that went to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) is equivalent to 84% of the number of VHR clients referred to the IDVA projects, indicating the attention given to victim safety.

**E3.4 Increase public confidence in CJS**

- Bringing more perpetrators to justice and improving victim support, safety and satisfaction can have subsequent benefits of increasing public confidence in the CJS.
- An assessment of agency and victim perceptions was beyond the scope of the quantitative data collection. However, interviews and focus groups with representatives from all six SDVCs visited indicated improved confidence in the CJS by both victims and the community.

E3.5 **The best SDVCs addressed both justice and safety measures and data indicated improved prosecutions, engagement and support for victims both in and outside of the CJS.** However performance in relation to bringing perpetrators to justice varied across the SDVCs as did the support for victims:

- Many of the SDVCs with high levels of successful prosecutions indicated higher levels of support for victims at court. However not all of them had a high level of engagement of victims generally.
- In contrast many of the SDVCs with high levels of engagement and support for victims outside of the court process did not illustrate improved prosecutions nor a focus on support for victims at court.

E3.6 Variability between the 23 SDVCs when analysed led to a levelling out in overall performance. The averaging of performance across the 23 SDVCs hid the high levels of success in some courts in bringing offenders to justice and in others supporting victims. The review therefore attempted to obtain a more detailed understanding of how six SDVCs, illustrating variations in performance, were operating. This aimed to supplement the data and provide best practice examples in improving prosecutions as well as ensuring safety of victims. In addition, information from the survey of all SDVCs provided further insights into the delivery of success measures.

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[7] In total, 5,844 victim referrals were made to IDVA services.
[8] IDVAs provide specialist DV support services for victims linked to SDVCs

E3.7    An analysis of all core components; identified good practice; and issues for improvement are outlined in Box 1.

## E4    CONCLUSIONS

E4.1    In conclusion, it was found that ***those SDVCs exhibiting the best practice addressed <u>ALL</u> components listed in the National Resource Manual as a means of seeking both justice and safety.*** However, an in-depth study of the variation in performance illustrated by six SDVCs elicited the following information:

The SDVCs that were **more successful in bringing more perpetrators to justice** had:
- Strong multi-agency partnerships;
- Effective systems for identification of cases;
- IDVAs with a focus on supporting victims at court;
- Good training and dedicated staff;
- Clustered court listing or a combination of cluster and fast-track court listings; and,
- Criminal justice perpetrator programmes.

The SDVCs that were **more successful in the support and safety of victims** had:
- Strong MARACs;
- IDVAs focusing on engaging victims generally; and,
- Safe court facilities.

E4.2    It was therefore clear that omission of any of the core components led to less successful outcomes in one or more of the measures. The combination of the overall components was pivotal in delivering success.

E4.3    Within the Review three components were identified where there were **systemic weaknesses**:
- In the SDVCs with a lower proportion of successful prosecutions there was a higher proportion of BME defendants, indicating a need for a focus on equality and diversity to address all success measures;
- All SDVCs need to address their performance through data collection and analysis to see where improvements are needed to meet all success measures; and,
- All SDVCs need to address children issues.

E.4.3    In general, SDVCs that formed part of a broader Coordinated Community Response[9] provided better support and safety for victims.

## E6    RECOMMENDATIONS

**It is recommended that:**

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[9] Coordinated Community Response is at http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/dv/dv014.htm

1. **SDVCs review their practice and processes in light of this review and identify and implement issues for improvement where necessary;**
2. **The National Resource Manual is revised to reflect the findings of this review;**
3. **All SDVCs are requested to ensure <u>all</u> components of the National Resource Manual are adhered to; and,**
4. **The National SDVC Steering Group draws up proposals for the future SDVC programme.**

**BOX 1      BEST PRACTICE AND ISSUES FOR IMPROVEMENT IN AN SDVC SYSTEM**

From the review, issues were highlighted and identified as best practice and issues for improvement in an SDVC system.

| Component | Best practice | Issues for improvement |
|---|---|---|
| **Component 1: Multi-Agency partnerships** | • A dedicated role to coordinate the work of agencies within the SDVC system;<br>• Broad strategic forums of key partners with protocols on roles, responsibilities and processes;<br>• Operational groups to carry out the day to day management of cases are crucial. | • Equal participation of all partners – especially in relation to the voluntary sector;<br>• Succession planning to ensure that SDVCs continue to function well once key personalities move on. |
| **Component 2: MARACs** | • Implementation of the national MARAC model, with key agencies, including voluntary sector and non-CJS statutory agencies, engaged in referral to, and operation of, MARACs;<br>• Key agencies MARAC trained and attending MARACs regularly;<br>• Good links with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Local Safeguarding Children Boards. | • Use of standardised risk assessments by all key agencies, with commonly agreed risk thresholds;<br>• A dedicated coordination function to ensure the MARAC is sufficiently administered and monitored. |
| **Component 3: Identification of cases** | • Use of government-wide definition to ensure consistency of approach;<br>• Use of operational systems to identify, manage and address any identification problems. | • Early identification of files, referral and monitoring systems across all agencies. |
| **Component 4: IDVAs** | • IDVAs need to work with other agencies to address victim safety and also support victims, both outside and within the court process;<br>• Links between IDVAs and other support services, with protocols, to ensure referral onward of non-high risk victims;<br>• Equal involvement of IDVAs in SDVC planning, operation and performance review to ensure victim safety is considered within the SDVC processes. | • Sustainable local funding of IDVAs with workloads within the CAADA recommended good practice levels;<br>• Improved systems, with protocols, to link IDVAs and the CJS to ensure all agencies address *both* justice and safety. |

| Component 5:<br>Training and<br>dedicated staff | • Training using recommended training materials;<br>• Multi-agency training to raise awareness and challenge attitudes and culture;<br>• Dedicated leads with allocated time from each agency. | • Trained personnel always to be used in SDVCs;<br>• In addition to dedicated DV training, the integration of DV issues into other training opportunities;<br>• Involvement of IDVAs in training CJS staff to illustrate the importance of victim safety. |
|---|---|---|
| Component 6:<br>Court listing | • Cluster SDVCs or a combination of fast-track and cluster[10] listing;<br>• Trained court personnel to be involved in all court hearings;<br>• Single listing of DV trials or prioritisation of DV cases where multiple trials are listed. | • Existing fast-track systems should also consider clustering to ensure trained and dedicated staff, with wrap-around services, for all hearings;<br>• Trial-only courts should consider methods to ensure trained and dedicated staff - with wrap-around services - are provided for all hearings;<br>• Links with Crown Court to be considered by local partnerships. |
| Component 7:<br>Equality and<br>diversity | • Provision of IDVAs and specialist support services to work with black and minority ethnic (BME) communities to provide services and address any significant disproportionality in provision of service;<br>• Victim and defendant profile data to be collected to inform performance;<br>• The needs of a range of victims, including men, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities and disabled victims as well as BME communities, to be addressed. | • SDVCs to address statutory equality duties and draw up equality impact assessments in relation to a range of communities;<br>• SDVCs to involve victims from a range of communities in court visits and consultation to improve performance and public confidence. |
| Component 8:<br>Data | • Data collection and analysis by dedicated leads to inform performance management; | • Success measures and targets to be provided by the National SDVC Steering |

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[10] Fast track systems (FTS) exist where DV cases proceed through the court system according to a quicker set of time scales compared to a non DV case. Cluster SDVCs group together DV cases for specific sessions. These usually include pre-trial reviews, remands, pleas, sentencing and, in some areas, specific sessions for trials.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **collection** | • Effective performance management systems to inform operational activities. | Group, reflecting CJS targets including both safety and justice;<br>• Quality control of data by all agencies;<br>• Data breakdown by all agencies into equality profiles to identify and address any potential significant disproportionality in outcomes. |
| **Component 9: Court facilities** | • Provision of safe entrances, exits and waiting facilities;<br>• Links between IDVAs, Witness Service and CPS to ensure early recognition of the need for special measure applications. | • Identification of cases for special measure applications to be monitored and any problems addressed. |
| **Component 10: Children** | • Links with children's projects, local safeguarding children's boards (LCSBs), education, health and family courts to address children's needs;<br>• Risk assessments that linked into LSCBs to ensure that the safety of all victims was coordinated. | • SDVCs need further development of how the SDVC system can support work with children;<br>• Links with children's work is needed at strategic and operational level;<br>• Protocols are needed across agencies to address the needs of children. |
| **Component 11: Perpetrator programmes** | • Good working relationships across CJS and IDVAs to ensure the referral of appropriate cases to perpetrator programmes;<br>• Provision of information by IDVAs to Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) writers to ensure the most up-to-date information on victims safety ;<br>• Information on perpetrator programmes included in CJS training sessions. | • Capacity issues with the CJS's perpetrator programmes;<br>• Consideration of the links to and use of, voluntary sector perpetrator programmes. |

**SPECIALIST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COURTS REVIEW 2007/08**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SDVCs represent a partnership approach to domestic violence by the police, prosecutors, court staff, the probation service and specialist support services for victims. Magistrates sitting in these courts are fully aware of the approach and have received additional training. These court systems provide a specialised way of dealing with domestic violence cases in magistrates' courts. They refer to the approach of a whole system, rather than simply a court building or jurisdiction. Agencies work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases, support victims of domestic violence and share information better so that more offenders are brought to justice.

1.2 This report summarises the findings from a review of the first 23 individual Specialist Domestic Violence Courts[11] (SDVCs) selected by the National SDVC Programme in 2005/6, all of which had started by April 2006.

1.3 A National Resource Manual[12] outlining the recommended core components of an SDVC[13] was published in March 2006 to aid consistency of service delivery in SDVCs. A further 39 SDVCs were selected in April 2007, bringing the total number of SDVCs to 64.

1.4 This report outlines the findings of a review of the first 23 SDVCs. The review aimed to:

1. Assess the performance of SDVCs and develop a better understanding of the key components needed to deliver the measures of success;
2. Assess the extent to which the first tranche of SDVCs are operating to the standards outlined in the National Resource Manual;
3. Identify barriers to delivery and good practice in relation to operating an SDVC; and,
4. Inform the ongoing development of the SDVC Programme including a review of the core components and the subsequent updating of the National Resource Manual.

1.5 The review comprised three elements:

1. Data analysis of the 23 SDVCs to obtain headline data across all SDVCs;
2. A survey of all the 23 SDVCs asking about their practice and processes to gain a better understanding of how the core components of an SDVC are being implemented; and,
3. In depth analysis of six SDVCs (selection being based on their performance) which included court observations, focus groups and individual interviews with

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[11] Listed in Annex A
[12] Link to the SDVC Resource Manual: www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence59.htm
[13] An outline of the core components is available in Annex B

key SDVC representatives which helped to indicate the key components for delivering success measures.

1.6 The review analysed data from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to quantitatively assess the performance of the SDVCs in comparison with their Areas as a whole. In addition, where available[14], data for SDVCs from police, courts, probation, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) and voluntary sector perpetrator programmes was also reviewed.

1.7 This process led to the identification of some potential gaps in the SDVC systems as described within the National Resource Manual and some anomalies in performance. In order to facilitate a clearer understanding of how the SDVCs were actually operating, and as a means of identifying good practice and effective procedures, six SDVCs were selected for a visit to allow a more qualitative examination of their processes. This alongside the statistical analysis allowed for a broader overview as detailed within this report. It was found to be of crucial importance that the data was tested. SDVCs were given the opportunity to describe their experience of developing a court and for the National Steering Group to be able to take a complete view of the SDVC system.

1.8 Visits to the SDVCs involved observing a court session in each area, interviewing individual leads from key agencies and holding a focus group of stakeholders. Feedback was supplied to all the court partnerships visited.

1.9 This review has now identified good practice and lessons from these courts to inform the future development of SDVCs, with a review of the National Resource Manual outlining the changes necessary to the key SDVC components.


## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In 2003/04 five existing specialist or fast track systems were evaluated by independent evaluators from the Universities of Wolverhampton, Cardiff and Leicester, funded by the CPS and the Ministry of Justice (the then Department of Constitutional Affairs).

2.2 From this evaluation, two pilot SDVCs were set up by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) - Caerphilly and Croydon - and evaluated for one year by the same independent evaluators.

2.3 Following the results of the evaluation, a National Steering Group consisting of officials from the Home Office, CPS and Ministry of Justice was set up to oversee and manage the roll out of SDVCs.

2.4 Results of the evaluations led to the development of a National Resource Manual outlining the key components for the setting up of SDVCs. A Task Group of national domestic violence (DV) experts advised on the content of the Manual.

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[14] Data was not mandatory from partner agencies. Wherever possible data was provided, although not all SDVCs provided data from all partners, nor on the whole was it robust. The CPS data therefore provided the main source of reliable data.

2.5     A total of 25 SDVCs systems were selected by the National Steering Group in 2005/06 to start by April 2006. Of these 25 systems, 21 were specific, named court systems and four were roll out Areas requested to develop a rolling programme for later selection[15]. Of the 21 named court systems one of them had three individual courts and therefore was evaluated separately, bringing the total for review to 23 SDVCs. The 23 systems included the initial seven SDVCs.

## 3.     METHODOLOGY OF REVIEW

### 3.1     Profile of all SDVCs

In April 2007, all 23 SDVCs selected in 2005/06 were asked to complete a questionnaire designed to determine the profile of their SDVC system in implementing each component of the SDVC model as stated in the Resource Manual. SDVCs were asked their views on their good practice and what needed further improvement. A separate document provides data from the questionnaires completed by the SDVCs which is available from the National Specialist Domestic Violence Court Programme Steering Group[16].

### 3.2     IDVA Audit

Alongside the SDVC system questionnaire, each SDVC was given a form to audit their local work by IDVAs. Analysis of the information is included in the separate document with the profiles.

### 3.3     Analysis of CPS data

3.3.1   CPS data was gathered via the CPS data collection system, COMPASS, which flags DV cases. As this system provided the most robust data of all the agencies it was used as a baseline for the assessment of the success of bringing DV defendants to justice within the court system.

3.3.2   The CPS Case Management System (CMS) and Witness Management System (WMS) were used to gather data throughout 2006-07. However, the flagging of cases was poor for the first two quarters (April – September 2006) and therefore data was only analysed for October 2006- March 2007, once the flagging system had improved.

3.3.3   CPS data was gathered by both SDVCs and by whole Areas. The Area data included all domestic violence cases, both those within the SDVC and those in

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[15] The selection of SDVCs from roll out Areas was carried out in 2006-07.
[16] The National Specialist Domestic Violence Court Steering Group comprises officials from the Inter-Personal Violence Team at the Home Office (0207 035 3273); The Domestic Violence Implementation Team at the Crown Prosecution Service (0207 796 8687); the Courts Innovation Branch and the Family Justice Division within Her Majesty's Courts Service (0115 9558136 and 0207 210 8796 respectively).

non-specialist courts. For most Areas the majority of cases were prosecuted in non-specialist courts so the Area data as a whole provides a useful comparison.

3.3.4    The data recorded successful outcomes, including details of unsuccessful cases, principal and key offences and profiles of defendants and, where possible, victims.

**3.4    Analysis of data from other agencies**

3.4.1    Performance data was requested from the police, courts, probation, IDVAs and any voluntary sector perpetrator programmes for October 2006 - March 2007. Data was not mandatory so many court systems did not provide data for all agencies.

3.4.2    Data from these agencies could only be provided from the SDVCs and not from their Areas as a whole. Therefore the SDVC data from all agencies, apart from CPS, could not be compared with non-specialist court systems.

**3.5    Selection of six SDVCs to visit**

3.5.1    Upon receipt of the available quantitative data, an analysis was carried out to determine the most successful performing SDVCs **in terms of the CPS data** and conversely those that appeared to be lower performing systems. Upon consideration of the IDVA data, any other available data and the information as to partnership working, contained within the profile questionnaires, six SDVC systems were identified for the purposes of a visit to provide a more in-depth element to the review process.

3.5.2    The purpose of the visits was to try and unpack the factors that were leading to good performance, identify barriers to good practice and try to determine the levers that would improve performance.

**3.6    Site visits for qualitative review**

3.6.1    Throughout late September and early October 2007 the six SDVC systems were visited by a team from the National SDVC Steering Group. Different members visited different sites – on average the leads visited two/three sites each, with support from the National Offender Management System (NOMS) and other HMCS staff in some visits.

3.6.2    Each visit was carried out over a two day period and consisted of a focus group of key stakeholders; interviewing individual leads from key agencies and a court observation session, using a standardised questionnaire. However the order of interviews, observation and focus groups varied in each visit. It is recognised that in the two day visit only a snapshot is possible. Victims were not interviewed, so assessment of victims' views was only through the partners. Assessment of victim safety and satisfaction was limited to indirect assessment through IDVAs, MARACs and other services that supported victims.

3.6.3 Whilst these visits covered each of the eleven SDVC components, they were seeking to add to the factual detail contained within the profile questionnaires as to if, how and why each component worked within the SDVC model in that particular system.

3.6.4 Prior to the visits, the Expert Panel, Magistrates Association and Justices Clerks Society were consulted as to the remit of the review and content of the questionnaire.

# 4    DATA ANALYSIS

## 4.1    Data collection:

4.1.1 CPS data from October 2006 - March 2007 was provided from all 23 SDVCs and for the 15 Areas where the SDVCs were located.

4.1.2 Data was additionally provided for October 2006 - March 2007 from:

- The police in 19 SDVCs;
- The courts in 12 SDVCs;
- IDVA services in 16 SDVCs[17];
- Probation in 14 SDVCs;  and,
- Voluntary sector services in the six SDVCs[18] running perpetrator programme.

## 4.2    Measures of success

For the purpose of the review, it was decided to measure the SDVCs against 2005-2008 Criminal Justice System (CJS) Public Service Agreements (PSAs)as measures of success:

- *Bringing more perpetrators to justice*
- *Improving the support, safety and satisfaction of victims*
- *Increasing public confidence in CJS.*

## *4.3    Bringing more perpetrators to justice*

- Arrests as a proportion of DV crimes reported to the police;
- Increased successful prosecution outcomes in DV cases[19];
- More courts achieving higher levels of successful DV prosecution outcomes in comparison with their Areas;
- Fewer cases being discontinued;
- Use of dedicated[20] and DV trained personnel in the SDVCs;
- Referrals, where appropriate, to perpetrators programmes.

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[17] 17 IDVA services for 16 SDVCs

[18] Five programmes provided data directly, RESPECT contacted the sixth programme to request data.

[19] Successful outcomes for CPS covers guilty pleas, convicted after trial and cases proved in absence.

[20] "Dedicated" refers to posts allocated to specifically work in the SDVC system. For cluster courts this would be in the SDVC session.

### 4.4 Improving the support, safety and satisfaction of victims

- Evidence of referral of victims to Independent DV Advisors (IDVAs);
- High level of IDVA referrals from the police;
- Evidence of contact and support for victims by IDVAs;
- Engagement of victims with IDVA services;
- Support of victims through court processes by IDVAs;
- Provision of civil injunctions for victims engaged with IDVAs;
- Prioritisation of IDVA work with high and very high risk cases;
- Referral of cases to Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).

### 4.5 Increase public confidence in CJS

- Perception of agencies and victims outside of the CJS that performance is improving.
- Evidence of broad and effective partnership working;
- Evidence of end-to-end performance management system used by partners;

Prior to the review, the most reliable data available was that relating to offenders brought to justice, supplied by the Crown prosecution Service (CPS). This review provided an opportunity to also look in more detail at support and safety for victims. The emphasis was therefore on the delivery of both justice and safety.

## 5 MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE 23 SDVCs

The following findings represent data analysed from **all** 23 SDVCs. The review then analysed, where possible, the factors involved in delivering these measures of success.

### 5.1 Bringing more perpetrators to justice

- ***Arrests as a proportion of DV crimes reported to the police***
  The police data indicated a high level of domestic violence crimes resulting in an arrest – an average of over 80% for the 11 SDVCs where the data was available. Four SDVCs had over 70% arrest rate and another four over 80%.

- ***Increased successful prosecution outcomes in cases[21]:***
  *The average for SDVC successful outcomes was 66% compared with their corresponding CPS Area average of 64%.* Although this reflects only a small increase, when the data is disaggregated it indicates a broad range of performance across the SDVCs, which is qualified in the qualitative review to indicate what components were key in delivering the best performance both in terms of justice and safety.

  *One of the courts achieved over 80% successful prosecutions,* which nearly reaches the national average of 84% for defendants prosecuted for all crimes.

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[21] Successful outcomes for CPS covers guilty pleas, convicted after trial and cases proved in absence.

This is exceedingly high for domestic violence cases. Historically, national domestic violence successful prosecutions were far lower than all other crimes. In 2005-6 domestic violence successful prosecutions were 60%, over 20% lower than the national average for all crimes.

For all SDVCs that improved their successful outcomes compared with their Areas, the *improvement was due predominantly to an increase in guilty pleas*. Not only does this lead to an increase in successful outcomes but also *to a potentially speedier process and more court time available* for cases needing trials.

- *More courts achieving higher levels of successful prosecution outcomes in comparison with their CPS Areas:*

  o Of the 23 SDVC systems, *ten achieved over 70% successful outcomes* (Chart 1).
  o Of 15 CPS Areas[22], only one achieved over 70% successful prosecutions (Chart 2).
  o This revealed that these SDVCs performed better than the non-specialist SDVCs within their CPS Areas.

**Chart 1: Percentage successful prosecution outcomes in the top ten performing SDVCs**



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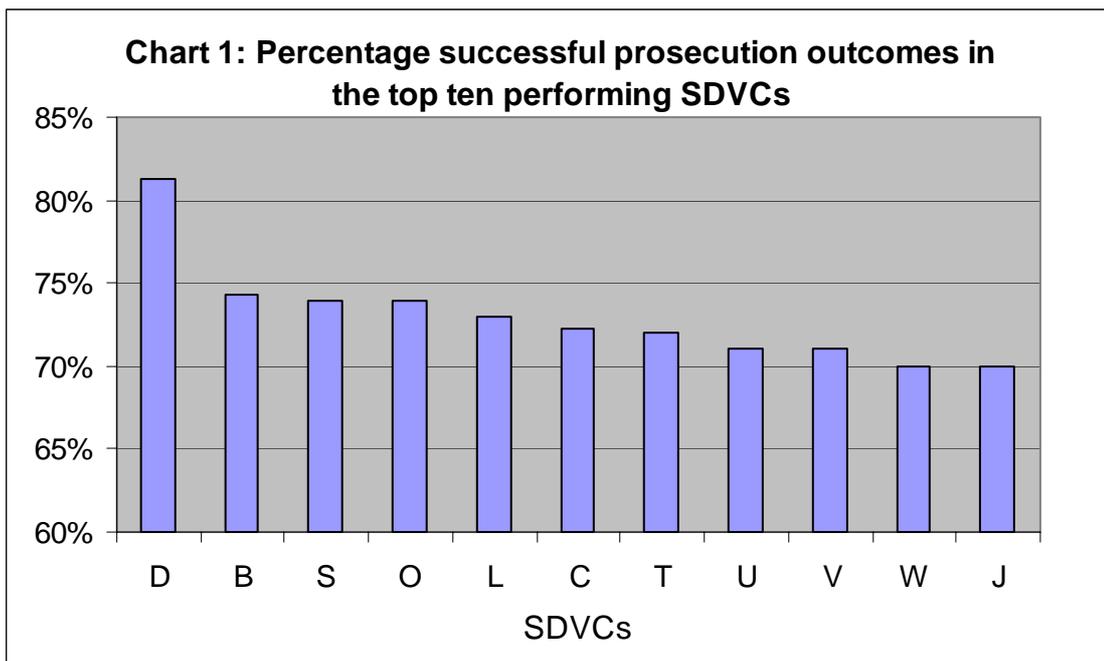
[22] The 23 SDVCs were within 15 CPS Areas, as some Areas had more than one SDVC.
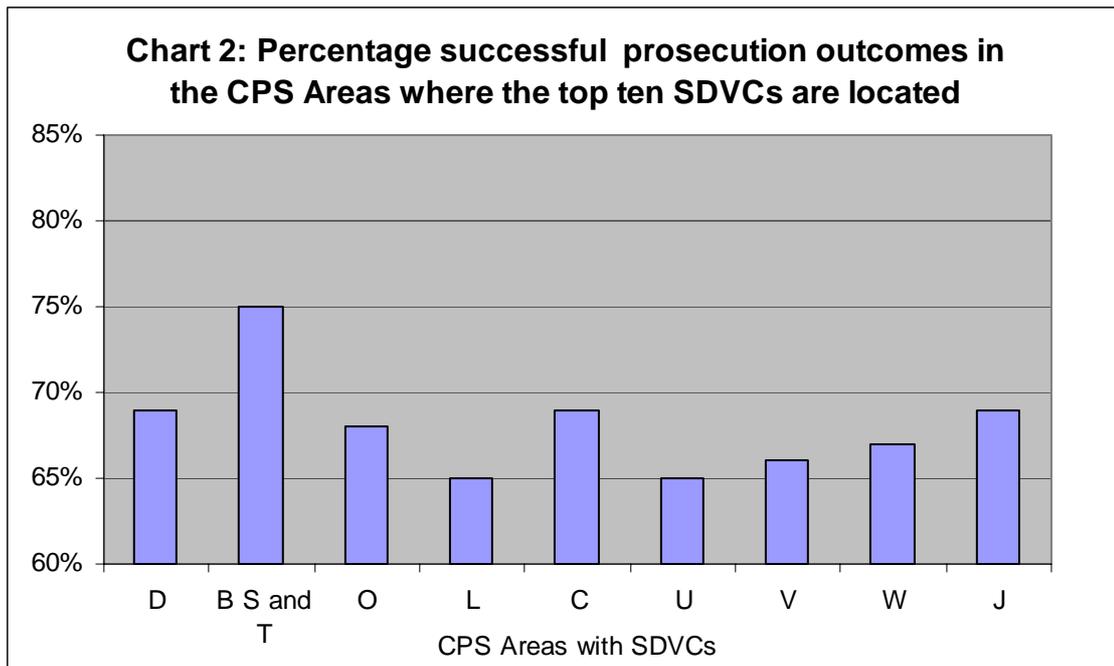
**Chart 2: Percentage successful prosecution outcomes in the CPS Areas where the top ten SDVCs are located**



- The ten SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes also had the least cases discontinued and were among the least with no evidence being offered at trial.

- Successful prosecutions were lower in the SDVCs with a higher proportion of BME defendants indicating the need to address equality and diversity issues to ensure that there is equality in prosecution of defendants.

- ***Fewer cases being discontinued:***
  There were slightly fewer cases discontinued (28% in SDVCs compared with 29% in Areas) including those where no evidence was offered (14% compared with 15%).

- ***Use of dedicated[23] and DV trained personnel in the SDVCs***
  *Dedicated personnel:*
  Of the 19 SDVCs[24] providing information, 15 had dedicated police staff, 18 dedicated CPS, 15 dedicated magistrates, 13 dedicated legal advisors and 11 dedicated probation staff. Of the SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes[25] over 75% had dedicated staff[26].

  *Domestic violence training:*

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[23] "Dedicated" refers to posts allocated to specifically work in the SDVC system. For cluster courts this would be in the SDVC session.

[24] The SDVC profiles provided data on staff and training – although only 21 SDVCs provided profile information and three SDVCs provided one profile to cover three SDVCs, so in total 19 profiles were provided.

[25] Nine SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes provided profile questionnaires – so this statement is based on these nine SDVCs.

[26] This figure excludes probation – although staff were linked to the SDVC they did not sit in the SDVC as dedicated staff.

14 SDVCs had CENTREX trained police, all had trained prosecutors, 18 trained magistrates, 14 trained legal advisors, 14 trained probation staff and 13 multi-agency training. Of the SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes[27] over 75% had trained staff[28].

- ***Referrals where appropriate to perpetrators programmes;***
  From probation data in the 14 SDVCs that provided data, 249 defendants were referred to perpetrator programmes.

  Of the six voluntary sector perpetrator programmes that provided data, 146 perpetrators were referred in the Areas with SDVCs.

## 5.2  *Improving the support, safety and satisfaction of victims*

- ***Evidence of referral of victims to IDVAs:***
  5,844 victim referrals were made to IDVA services in the areas with SDVC systems. On average 344 cases per IDVA, however one of the IDVA services had a very high level of referrals from a helpline and if they were omitted the average was 269. This is a high level of referrals over a six month period.

- ***High level of IDVA referrals from the police:***
  80% of referrals to IDVAs were made by the police, which indicated good links between services supporting victims and the criminal justice system (CJS) at an early stage.

- ***Evidence of contact and support for victims by IDVAs:***
  Average work caseloads for IDVAs were 70 in six months, or 140 annually, which is higher than the CAADA[29] recommended case load of 80-100 cases per annum.

  IDVA services contacted over half of total referrals (54%).  This figure included data from projects that had varying IDVA cover across the six months and the service that operated a helpline service that responded to calls but did not initiate calls.  Excluding data from this last service, the contact figure was 83%.  This indicated a high level of contact considering that due to the nature of the issue and fears of further violence from the perpetrator, victims historically have been reluctant to involve agencies, especially with any links to the CJS.

- ***Engagement of victims with IDVA services:***
  The national average for engagement of contacted victims with IDVA services stood at 73%.  This is particularly impressive because it is often difficult to engage clients at high risk of harm as minimising the seriousness of the abuse has often been their best survival tool.

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[27] Nine SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes provided profile questionnaires – so this statement is based on these nine SDVCs.

[28] Information on training for probation staff was not provided in five of the SDVCs with over 70% successful outcomes and therefore this statement excludes probation staff.

[29] CAADA is the Coordinated Action against Domestic Abuse that coordinates IDVAs nationally.

- *Support of victims through criminal court processes by IDVAs*
  74% of clients going through the court process were supported by IDVAs at court.
  The introduction of IDVAs in SDVCs is the first time that systems have been set up to support victims of domestic violence both within and outside the CJS.

- *Provision of  civil injunctions*
  87% of all IDVA supported victims seeking injunctions, in associated civil proceedings, were granted them.

- *Prioritisation of IDVA work with high and very high risk cases:*
  60% of total referrals nationally were at very high risk (43%VHR) or high risk (17% HR) of significant harm.

- *Referral of cases to Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs):*
  In terms of volume, 1002 clients from 16 IDVA projects[30] were reviewed at MARAC.  This compares to 802 clients supported at the SDVC.  As not all high risk (HR) or very high risk (VHR) clients go through the criminal court system, the MARAC is essential to ensure that these clients' safety is addressed and managed by this multi-agency group.

  The number of VHR cases that went to MARAC represents 84% of the number of VHR clients referred to the IDVA projects.

### 5.3  Increase public confidence in CJS:

- Bringing more perpetrators to justice, as outlined in 5.1, and improving victim support, safety and satisfaction, as outlined in 5.2, both increase public confidence in the CJS.

- *Perception of agencies and victims outside of the CJS that performance is improving:*
  Assessment of agency and victim perceptions was beyond the scope of the quantitative data collection. However, from the visits, all six SDVCs indicated improved confidence in the CJS by both victims and the public.

- *Evidence of broad and effective partnership working;*
  All but one SDVC had a specific SDVC steering group and the SDVC without addressed the SDVC issues within an overall DV strategy group.

  However, only eight steering groups included all key agencies. Eight did not include IDVAs, three did not include specialist support services, six did not include Victim Support / Witness Services and in two SDVCs local authorities were not involved in the process.

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[30] At this time, the 17th IDVA project did not have a MARAC

This could indicate that the voluntary sector had not been included as key, equal partners in running the SDVCs in these court systems, which would raise concerns about support for victims and safety being central to the success measures of these specific court systems.
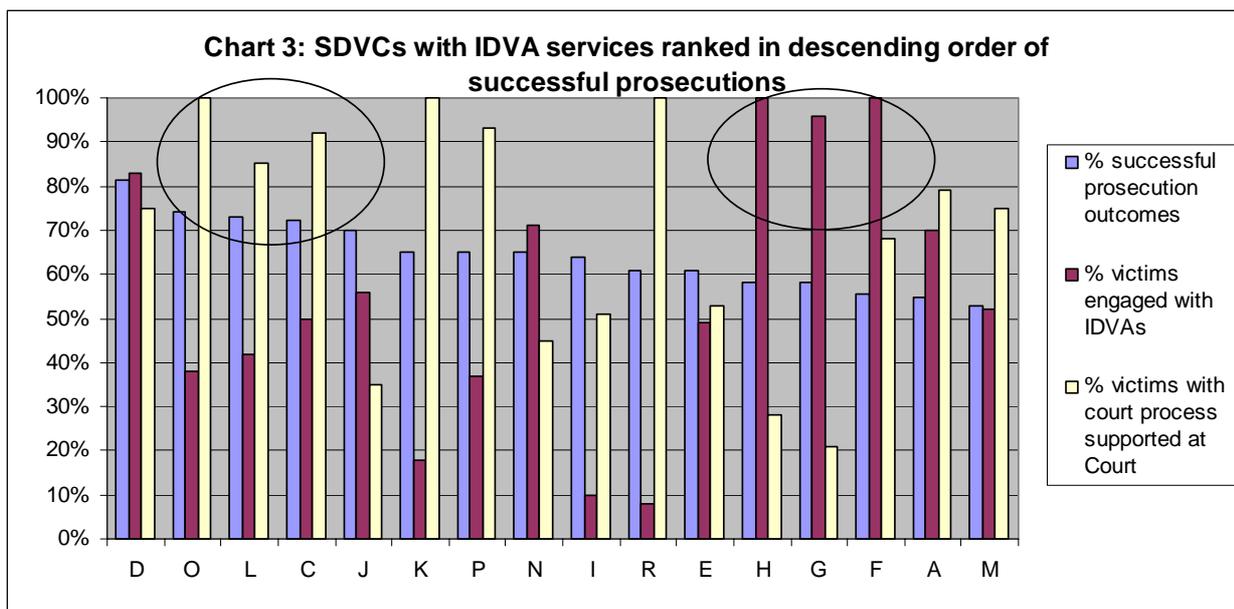
- ***Evidence of end-to-end performance management system used by partners***
  From the profiles, 12 SDVCs indicated that they collected data, other than CPS data, but it was only used in six SDVCs for performance reports. This indicated a lack of prioritisation of this key component.

5.3.1 The best practice of improving prosecutions as well as ensuring safety of victims and improving public confidence has therefore been drawn out from the SDVCs visited in the qualitative section of the report.

## 6. COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT OF SDVCs FOR SITE SELECTIONS

6.1 In assessing the data from all SDVCs it was noted that the performance in relation to bringing perpetrators to justice varied across the SDVCs, as did the support for victims.



Chart 3: SDVCs with IDVA services ranked in descending order of successful prosecutions

Legend:
- % successful prosecution outcomes
- % victims engaged with IDVAs
- % victims with court process supported at Court

6.2 From Chart 3[31] the ringed left side of the chart indicates that these SDVCs had a higher level of successful prosecutions, with many providing support for victims at court. From the ringed right side of Chart 3 it can be seen that these SDVCs were not as effective in bringing perpetrators to justice, but many seemed to have focused far more on providing support for victims outside of the court system, thereby addressing safety.

6.3 A comparison was made between those SDVCs at either end of the spectrum of

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[31] 16 SDVCs that had IDVA services provided data for analysis

performance: the top SDVCs with improved prosecutions were compared with the SDVCs that had lower prosecution outcomes.

It was found that:
- SDVC D indicated the best performance in relation to all success measures which is the model needed to improve both justice and safety;
- Other SDVCs, with IDVA data, performing well in prosecutions illustrated support for victims at court although some had slightly lower levels of engagement with victims overall;
- And other SDVCs indicating more of a focus on engagement with victims for all support services, some including support at court, had lower levels of successful prosecutions.

This information was used in the selection of SDVCs to visit. Their qualitative analysis was then used to provide information on best practice to meet all success measures.

6.4     Three SDVCs were therefore chosen that performed well in relation to prosecutions but with differing characteristics:

- SDVC D was a newer SDVC, performing well in both prosecutions and support for victims;
- SDVC C was a well-established system, performing well in prosecutions and support for victims at court but engaging slightly less victims overall. Both had provided data from all agencies.
- SDVC B was a well-established system dealing with all hate crimes, performing well in prosecutions, but with no IDVA or MARAC during the period data was recorded. This raised issues about the support and safety of victims at that time.

Three SDVCs were also chosen that performed well in relation to engaging victims but with lower performance in relation to prosecutions (Chart 4):

- SDVC E had mid-range performance in relation to CPS and IDVA data and had provided data from most other agencies;
- SDVCs F and A were well-established SDVCs that appeared to support victims well, as indicated through their IDVA data, but had not provided data from most of the other agencies.

**Chart 4: SDVCs selected for site visits ranked in descending order of successful prosecutions**



Legend:
- % successful prosecution outcomes
- % victims engaged with IDVAs for all support services
- % victims with a court process supported at Court
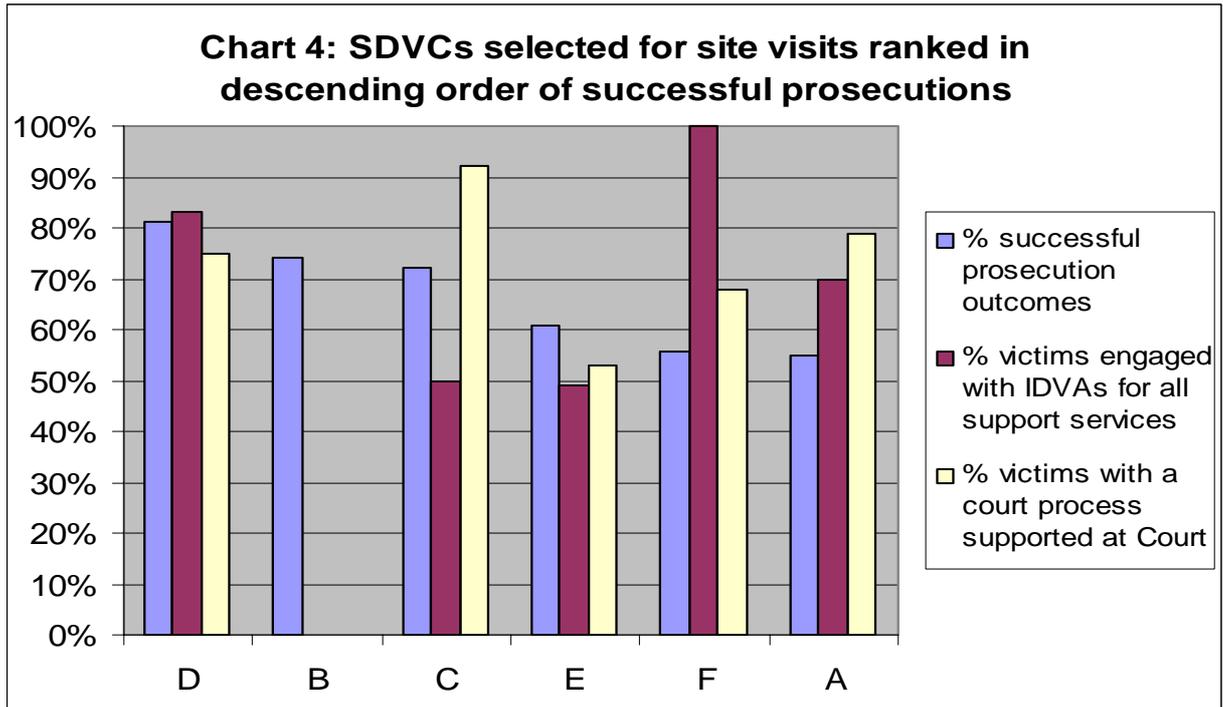
## 7  MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE SIX SITES VISITED

Variability between the 23 SDVCs when analysed led to a levelling out in overall performance. The averaging of performance across the 23 SDVCs hid the high levels of success in some courts in bringing offenders to justice and in others supporting victims. The review therefore attempted to obtain a more detailed understanding of how six SDVCs, illustrating variations in performance, were operating. This aimed to supplement the data and provide best practice examples in improving prosecutions as well as ensuring safety of victims. In addition, information from the survey of all SDVCs provided further insights into the delivery of success measures.

### 7.1  COMPONENT 1: MULTIAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

**Best practice:**
- A dedicated role to coordinate the work of agencies within the SDVC system;
- Broad strategic forums of key partners with protocols on roles, responsibilities and processes;
- Operational groups to carry out the day to day management of cases are crucial.

**Issues for improvement:**
- Equal participation of all partners – especially in relation to the voluntary sector;
- Succession planning to ensure that SDVCs continue to function well once

| key personalities move on. |
| --- |

**7.1.1** This component emphasised the importance of a broad, coordinated community response. The most effective SDVCs had established their courts as part of this response, with the criminal justice system being one element. Where the wider needs of victims, their children and particularly their safety were considered, alongside a determination to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure the court "performed" well, success was readily identifiable.

| *One SDVC Steering Group had a senior strategic leadership group overseeing the partnership of 50 members and four action groups (training, children, criminal and civil law, survivors). (SDVC C)* |
| --- |

7.1.2 Every court focus group was very clear that the SDVC had improved the experience of the victim in relation to the criminal justice process and the provision of increased safety. This had led to cultural change around the issues of domestic violence which, in itself, had widened the debate about the responses to this crime.

7.1.3 In many SDVCs there was a polarisation between successfully prosecuting cases and successfully improving the safety of victims. The best SDVCs addressed both and developed a unified approach across agencies. SDVCs clearly needed advice on "success measures" to include safety as well as justice as outlined in paragraph *check para ref*

7.1.4 All the SDVCs visited had some form of governance structure for effective functioning. Progress had been made in all areas with evidence of development and improvement. The main issues impacting upon the effectiveness of the courts in relation to this component are outlined in Component 1.

### 7.1.5 Strategic Influence and Direction
The visits confirmed that strong strategic forums **and** operational groups, properly administered, minuted with actions completed and held sufficiently regularly to deliver performance and accountability, are essential.

7.1.6 Partnerships that focused mainly on the operational aspect of the court and had limited support from, or links to, the strategic level had problems with funding, sustainability and awareness of the benefits of the court from the relevant leadership.

7.1.7 This leadership would generally emanate (if present) from the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP) or Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB). Both should understand where an SDVC sits within the larger themes of community safety and the delivery of justice.

| *The LCJB would take over the governance of the SDVC linked to CJSSS and have a separate group overseeing its performance. (SDVC B)* |
| --- |

7.1.8 Champions at a strategic level that support an effective response to domestic violence and provide leadership within their agencies and across the partnership were valued.

> *An elected member chairs the Executive Group and this is seen as giving weight to the issue. A Scrutiny Panel of the Local Authority also directed that a senior DV representative be appointed from each council department giving DV a higher level of priority. (SDVC C)*

### 7.1.9 Operational Management

All the court systems visited had some form of operational structure managing the running of the court and dealing with the "day to day" problems of the SDVC. These were varied with some less effective, but this was often a product of limited resources in terms of both funding and personnel. Six of the seven SDVCs with operational groups were in the top ten SDVCs for successful prosecutions.

> *A "Tracker" meeting has been set up on a fortnightly basis, which identified cases due in court for the next four weeks and then ensured correct process. (SDVC E)*

7.1.10 Those SDVCs which operated most impressively had regular meetings of the key personnel involved in all aspects of the court, a clear agenda and data which allowed performance to be assessed. Some operational groups had insufficient power or influence to achieve change to, or development of an SDVC.

### 7.1.11 Partner Involvement

In some SDVCs there was a lack of communication between partners and some aspects of unequal status and influence in some SDVCs. Examples included SDVCs where the voluntary sector were either not present at meetings or did not feel able to express their concerns about the operation of the court. In some SDVCs relevant partners were absent from the process entirely.

7.1.12 However, some SDVCs not only included their voluntary sector in the governance but also engaged victims and community groups in the process.

> *Community groups sit in on court – so popular there is a waiting list to attend. This has helped improve victim confidence. (SDVC D)*
>
> *A survivors group was consulted when developing the SDVC. (SDVC C)*

### 7.1.13 Protocols

Information sharing seemed largely to have been resolved, although this had taken some time in certain areas. Despite protocols, in practice some SDVCs did not action their agreements.

7.1.14 In terms of roles and responsibilities the picture was more varied.

> *The most impressive example of such a protocol was an agreement between the police and CPS whereby the police would produce the prosecution papers*

> *for a case within three weeks. This allowed the CPS to make timely decisions on the basis of all the evidence. It also illustrated ways to ensure speedy action within a statutory charging framework that some SDVCs had claimed impossible. (SDVC D)*

### 7.1.15 Personalities and Process

Throughout the visits the commitment, skill and dedication of many people were outstanding. Without such individuals many courts would simply not be operating and certainly not delivering such striking outcomes.

7.1.16 Consideration had been given to succession planning with some roles but this was not consistent. Where processes existed which would allow continuity following the departure of the original, inspiring figure, this was much more likely to allow the maintenance of performance.

7.1.17 Where partners were provided with additional time to complete their role in connection with the SDVC, this led to better outcomes. A notable comparison was where CPS staff in different areas were given vastly dissimilar opportunities to complete their SDVC tasks alongside their other duties.

### 7.1.18 SDVC Coordination

The continuation and development of a court is more achievable if one person has the delegated authority to act for the partners. There is therefore clearly a role for an initial project manager and then an ongoing coordinator with the space and time to ensure data collation, performance management, coordination and administration of meetings.

> *An excellent DV Coordinator, if supported strategically and financially, will be at the heart of the development of specific developments, such as MARACs and IDVAs, but more importantly be possessed of the bigger picture and how the whole response should work and ensuring it does. Much, however, depends on the calibre of this individual. (SDVC C)*

### 7.2 COMPONENT 2: MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCES

> **Best practice:**
> - Implementation of the national MARAC model, with key agencies, including voluntary sector and non-CJS statutory agencies engaged in referral to, and operation of, MARACs;
> - Key agencies MARAC trained and attending MARAC regularly;
> - Good links with Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB).
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Use of standardised risk assessments by all key agencies along with commonly agreed risk thresholds;
> - A dedicated coordination function to ensure the MARAC is sufficiently administered and monitored.

A model for the operation of a MARAC has been developed based on the evaluated approach taken to high risk victims of domestic violence in Cardiff. An associated implementation programme to support the roll out of MARACs, consisting of training, guidance and support, has been developed by CAADA.

7.2.1 At the time of data collection five SDVCs were operating at least one MARAC and four areas had received training through the MARAC implementation programme, provided by CAADA.

7.2.2 Generally, SDVC areas felt that the training was successful with one area describing it as 'immensely effective'. Improved effectiveness could take particular account of how the MARAC would fit into local variation in structures and services.

7.2.3 MARACs were at varying stages of development with a spread of SDVC areas having either monthly or fortnightly MARAC meetings.

7.2.4 There were some variations from the national model identified.  It is suggested that MARACs deviating from accepted practice should keep records to show that their variation leads to better safety results.

### 7.2.5  Risk assessment[32] and the MARAC
The majority of SDVCs visited were routinely assessing the risk of domestic violence victims to varying extents and there was a substantial amount of local variation in relation to the risk assessment tools and the risk thresholds used.

> *All key agencies carried out risk assessment including Women's Aid, IDVA service and BME support service. (SDVC A)*

7.2.6 Within some SDVCs, agencies were using different risk assessment tools, a potentially confusing practice which may inhibit the development of a common understanding of risk, unless carefully managed.

7.2.7 There was concern that some SDVCs established varying risk thresholds to manage limited resources: one area only referred high risk domestic violence cases to MARAC if a crime had been committed (as opposed to any incident which could significantly increase risk i.e. threats of suicide, leaving the relationship etc), while another limited their referrals to very high risk cases.

7.2.8 There was variation in relation to agencies carrying out risk assessment. In the majority of SDVCs visited, risk assessment was being carried by all partners (both criminal justice and non-criminal justice partners). However one SDVC had chosen not to encourage non-criminal justice partners to undertake risk assessment, preferring instead for a MARAC coordinator to undertake all risk assessments and to make decisions on referrals to MARAC. Again, it is suggested that MARACs deviating from accepted practice should keep records to show that their variation leads to better safety results.

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[32] ACPO are currently developing national risk assessment standards for the Police

### 7.2.9 MARAC organisation
#### Coordination and governance

One SDVC had been particularly successful in securing commitment for coordination and governance of the MARAC pilot operating in the area. The MARAC coordinator was seconded from the Probation Service for an 18 month period. The MARAC was managed by a recently established MARAC project management board chaired by the Head of CID and answerable to the LCJB.

### 7.2.10 Chairing responsibilities

In all the SDVCs the MARAC was being chaired by either the police or probation. However, in one SDVC the police shared the chairing with the head of the dedicated domestic violence safety unit in the area. A further SDVC was also considering a rotating chair. Chairing by the police is recommended in the MARAC guidance because public safety is their statutory responsibility.

### 7.2.11 Partner engagement

All SDVCs visited felt that partner engagement was generally good, with good attendance levels and the correct level of representation, except for children's services.

7.2.12 Some concerns were raised in one area about the low level of preparation undertaken by some members of the MARAC. In another SDVC area issues were raised in relation to the engagement of health, mental health services and social services more generally (in relation to both commitment and resources).

7.2.13 IDVAs attended all MARAC meetings and in one SDVC area the IDVA was represented on both the MARAC and at MAPPA meetings.

7.2.14 IDVAs often have most information about the current position of the victim, but this knowledge was not always utilised at MARACs or when Probation were preparing pre-sentence reports.

### 7.2.15 Links with other public protection arrangements

There was a good level of engagement in the MARAC process by both the police and the Probation Service. This appeared to lead to both formal and informal links between MARAC and MAPPA.

> *The MARAC coordinator in one SDVC was seconded from the Probation Service background and had a good operational knowledge of MAPPA. MARAC was also a standing item on MAPPA Strategic Management Board meetings.(SDVC B)*
>
> *The IDVA sat on both the MARAC and the MAPPA meetings when domestic violence cases were being discussed. (SDVC A)*

### 7.3 COMPONENT 3: IDENTIFICATION OF CASES

> **Best practice:**

> - Use of government-wide definition to ensure consistency of approach;
> - Identification of files and monitoring by all agencies;
> - Use of operational systems to identify and address any identification problems.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Early identification of files, referral and monitoring systems across all agencies.

7.3.1 There was a consistent approach to defining domestic violence with the Government definition being the general approach used. Some courts mentioned the gap in provision for 16-18 year olds and where an adult becomes a victim of an under 18 perpetrator.

7.3.2 Early identification (i.e. by the police) is key to ensuring all domestic violence cases are captured within the system. The CPS and Courts in all the areas visited had instituted processes to retrieve any cases missed initially.

7.3.3 In one area, the IDVAs were the largest source of identification of DV cases. The lack of systems by all CJS agencies was of concern.

7.3.4 Good practice SDVCs used the steering group to resolve issues such as missing cases or any conflict between agencies.

## 7.4 COMPONENT 4: INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVISERS

> **Best practice:**
> - IDVAs need to work with other agencies to address victim safety and also support victims both outside and within the court process;
> - Links between IDVAs and other support services, with protocols, to ensure referral onward of non-high risk victims;
> - Equal involvement of IDVAs in SDVC planning, operation and performance review to ensure victim safety is considered within the SDVC processes.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Sustainable local funding of IDVAs to ensure workloads within the CAADA recommended good practice levels;
> - Improved systems with protocols to link IDVAs and the CJS to ensure all agencies address *both* justice and safety.

7.4.1 All the SDVCs visited recognised the value of the IDVA services and how important it is to use them effectively.  The SDVCs identified key aspects of effective IDVA work:

- Ensuring clarity about the IDVAs' remit to work with those at high risk of harm to keep them safe;
- Establishing referral routes to the IDVA, especially from the police;

- Ensuring the benefits of locating the IDVA in an agency where their independence and focus on client safety is demonstrable to both victims and other agencies;
- Integrating IDVAs as equal partners in both the planning and operation of the court, with the clear remit of independently representing the victim;
- Clear communication links between the IDVAs and the agencies that work through the SDVCs (in particular the police, CPS and Witness Service) for referrals, to be able to get information to clients quickly and to be able to feed back issues that arise for victims and witnesses.

> *All high-risk referrals are contacted by the IDVA unless they have stipulated that they don't wish to be contacted. 83% are engaging, probably due to the timeliness of the contact. (SDVC D)*

> *The IDVA calls at the police station every day to attend the daily briefing session about the previous night's incidents, where non-MARAC cases can also be picked up and referred to a Women's Aid service. There are good working links between the IDVA and the DV Unit. (SDVC D)*

> *Representatives in one SDVC believed that strong links between the voluntary sector and CJS agencies meant victims were happier to cross between agencies. (SDVC B)*
>
> *There are close working relationships between the IDVA, Witness Service and Witness Care Unit. (SDVC F)*

7.4.2 All SDVCs expressed concern about the on-going funding for the IDVA post. In some places this was thought to be related to a perceived lack of local strategic commitment to a co-ordinated approach. Mainstreaming of domestic violence funding continues to be a problem area for partnerships.

7.4.3 All SDVCs visited felt that referral routes were needed to refer on the non-high risk (HR) victims.

> *Non-HR victims are referred to a Women's Aid outreach service for support if the victim agrees – as the IDVA is based in this agency there is good follow through. (SDVC D*

### 7.4.4 Factors that contributed to success
Most successful courts were embedded in an approach that recognised that the SDVC was one arm of a co-ordinated response that addressed victim safety. They understood that the IDVA was central and essential to that larger function and success of the SDVC. Although IDVAs focus primarily on victim safety some SDVCs noted that this resulted in more victims staying in the court process.

> *Housing has a Sanctuary programme with a good response before and after installation – this makes clients safer and adds to their sense of security. (SDVCF)*

7.4.5 Systems worked best where the agencies involved in the SDVC recognised that the role of the IDVA was to address the risk to the client, based on a risk assessment, regardless of whether they were going through the court system, but with support available to ensure justice as well as safety was addressed.

7.4.6 One of the courts with higher prosecution rates noted in the course of the visit that they would benefit from having a formal review process through which IDVAs could channel concerns about the SDVC process, the performance of peers, and the agencies that work with clients.

7.4.7 In the best practice SDVCs, clients in court were supported by an IDVA and the IDVAs were involved in the training programmes for court personnel.

7.4.8 Victim satisfaction and safety was not measured by most SDVCs, because of the complexity of carrying out assessments with victims sensitively and safely. However, all SDVCs visited were unanimous in the value of the support provided by IDVAs, it s link to safety and satisfaction. One SDVC carried out a survey on this point.

> *The Witness Service carried out a survey of all victims following their cases. It indicated that victims assessed their safety throughout the process at 100%. (SDVC D)*

### 7.4.9 *Issues for improvement*

Where courts were less effective in bringing perpetrators to justice they often appreciated the IDVAs, but did not use them effectively. In some, the police did not refer regularly to the IDVA and in one it was felt that there was a conflict between the safety of victims and justice for victims where safety concerns led to the non-attendance of the victim or the withdrawal of allegations. Data certainly indicated that where the focus was not on the court system as well as safety, SDVCs had more unsuccessful prosecutions due to victim retractions and non-attendance.

7.4.10 A shared understanding of risk is also necessary. Where referral is on the basis of the charge alone, rather than on the wider set of indicators in an IDVAs' risk assessment, the value of the IDVA is severely reduced and those that are at high risk, but are not in the criminal court system, may go unsupported.

7.4.11 In some SDVCs, where IDVAs were not involved in the steering group of the SDVC or in supporting clients at court, practical safety issues in the CJS may not have been addressed. These IDVAs may have been focussing outside the CJS on other services; particularly processes that they felt confident with and could influence to meet their clients' safety needs.

7.4.12 Location of the IDVA is important. If the IDVA is placed in a CJS agency, the IDVA service can be seen to be part of that agency by clients. Independence from the CJS has previously been shown to improve victim confidence.

### 7.5 COMPONENT 5: TRAINING AND DEDICATED STAFF

> **Best practice:**
> - Training using recommended training materials;
> - Multi-agency training to raise awareness and challenge attitudes and culture;
> - Dedicated leads with allocated time from each agency.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Trained personnel to always be used in SDVCs;
> - In addition to dedicated DV training, the integration of DV issues into other training opportunities;
> - Involvement of IDVAs in training CJS staff to illustrate the importance of victim safety.

7.5.1 Training for all agencies was seen as key for many of the SDVCs. Multi-agency training was seen as extremely useful to increase the awareness of personnel by most SDVCs visited.

Domestic violence training should be relevant, recent and of good quality. Quality of training is as important as the number of training events taking place.

> *All parties considered that training was essential and has made a considerable difference in attitudes to dealing with DV across the CJS. (SDVC D)*
>
> *Specialist training of all personnel was seen as one of the success stories of the SDVC. (SDVC F)*

### 7.5.2 Dedicated police officers and training:

7.5.3 There was some good practice demonstrated in an SDVC noted for its good performance.

> *Front line officers are kept up to date with domestic violence training through electronic communications and electronic workbooks rolled out on chief constable's orders. Each student officer has a placement in the Public Protection Investigation Unit. Last year's tackling domestic abuse policy was promoted to officers by PowerPoint presentation to each shift. (SDVC D)*
>
> *If defendants are in custody the DV Unit officers contact the custody office to highlight previous incidents to help draw up any bad character applications. (SDVC D)*

7.5.4 However, training for police officers was limited in two of the SDVC areas visited, both of which were categorised as not performing as well as expected in prosecutions.

7.5.5 According to partner agencies in one SDVC area, training impacted upon evidence gathering; referrals to specialist support services; and standards of procedure in relation to retraction statements and the taking of personal

statements. A commitment to tackle this was evidenced by the identification of 12 police domestic violence champions and the issuing of an investigation pack. However, the benefits of this were not yet obvious to partners.

### 7.5.6 Dedicated police response

> *One SDVC that performed well in prosecutions listed an extensive range of activities as recommended in the ACPO guidance including:*
>
> - *A well staffed DV Unit which has a quality assurance and control role from the beginning to end of a case with checks regularly being made in relation to positive action;*
> - *Police officers in the DV Unit analyse the previous 24 hours DV incidents. High risk victims are thus identified and trigger the MARAC process. (SDVC D)*

7.5.7 The extent to which alternative evidence (in addition to victims' oral evidence) was used was unclear in one SDVC, despite encouragement to taking cases forward without victim evidence. Even in some of the SDVCs with higher levels of successful prosecutions, the unsuccessful cases were due more to the victim evidence not supporting the case rather than victim retractions or non-attendance.

> *The police view is that having the specialist courts and links with CPS and evidence gathering makes it easier to 'sell' DV training to frontline operational staff. (SDVC B)*

7.5.8 In one court observation, where there was no dedicated police presence, there were delays as the prosecutor twice had to go out of the court room and spend time phoning the police in relation to two separate cases. In another SDVC there was an officer present but it was unclear as to how they assisted the process. Both observations indicated the importance of a dedicated pro-active officer.

7.5.9 Accountability issues in relation to the investigative approach by the police were raised in one SDVC, with a lack of senior monitoring and action around the quality assurance of investigations. A possible bi-product of this may be the inappropriate cautioning by the police in this SDVC area. This was highlighted as an issue by the police representative with a 50/50 caution/charge rate in 2006/07.

### 7.5.10 CPS staff:

All CPS personnel were trained for all SDVCs but training alone was not enough to deliver good practice.
- Providing dedicated prosecutors (who are allocated adequate preparation time) for the SDVC ensured commitment, consistency and the development of experience and was also reflected in the better outcomes in cases.
- Another example of good practice was training for designated caseworkers and Witness Care Unit staff.

- The use of untrained agency staff instead of CPS prosecutors was identified by partner agencies as a problem.

> *Trials were always conducted by lawyers and where agents are used it is with reluctance. The two agents that the CPS used have both had DV training. (SDVC B)*

### 7.5.11 Judiciary:

7.5.12 Magistrates were enthusiastic about the DV training they had received and were clearly implementing that training.

> *Specialist training has had a huge impact on magistrates' understanding of the issues involved in domestic violence cases….training appears to have had a direct impact on decisions being made. (SDVC C)*
>
> *There is a demonstrable difference in the SDVC in the questions magistrates ask in the courtroom after training. (SDVC C)*
>
> *Partners recognised the impact of the training of magistrates upon sentencing. (SDVC A)*

7.5.13 One of the focus groups in the six SDVCs visited made a recommendation that the Judicial Studies Board training pack 'Domestic Violence: An Ordinary Crime?' should be mandatory for all magistrates nationally. The JSB pack was also considered effective by one other area and a useful basis for training in another.

7.5.14 Where there is no clustering of cases into a dedicated court, best practice would be that, as far as is practicable, all of the members of the Bench have received good quality, recent and relevant DV training.

7.5.15 There are clear advantages in offering domestic violence training to all magistrates. This avoids the creation of 'specialist' panels and makes the magistrates' rota easier to administer. Additionally it would ensure a consistent approach in dealing with matters before the case reaches the trial date in a fast track system and on sentencing after the trial.

7.5.16 Where resources dictate that training the entire Bench is logistically impossible (particularly where the number trained are going to be a low percentage of the whole) this fits better with the cluster listing as a dedicated Bench can be allocated to that sitting. In one area because domestic violence training was constrained it was offered as a priority to Family Panel magistrates.

> *The example of a court asking for a pre-sentence report based on an expectation of a low level community penalty and consistent weakening of conditions at applications to vary bail are possible indications of a training need and of the need for training to be of good standard. (SDVC D)*

> *Magistrates now see domestic violence as violent incidents in a home environment. (SDVC A)*

7.5.17 Training events that carry Continuing Professional Development Points have been most effective in involving defence advocates.

7.5.18 A concern was raised on several occasions that where District Judges had not undertaken the same training as magistrates there was an inconsistent approach to domestic violence cases in those areas.

> *The local magistrates' monthly magazine is used to provide general advice and feedback on concerns that have been brought to the attention of the Bench Legal Manager. (SDVC D)*

7.5.19 One area commented that the Sentencing Guidelines Council provided good and useful advice but training representatives were receiving the guidance at the same time as it was published. Earlier receipt of the guidance would mean that training could be planned to coincide with publication.

### 7.5.20 Multi-agency training

Training is felt by most areas to be more effective where there has been good multi-agency input and the training has been offered to legal advisers, magistrates and other court staff.

7.5.21 Multi-agency events are felt in some areas to have a significant impact on changing attitudes, behaviour and practice across agencies. Multi-agency training helps all staff understand where the court fits into the co-ordinated community response to domestic violence in their area and understand issues about victim safety and how that is directly relevant to the advice they give and decisions they make in court.

## 7.6   COMPONENT 6: COURT LISTING

> **Best practice:**
> - Cluster SDVCs or a combination of fast-track and cluster[33] listing;
> - Trained court personnel to be involved in all court hearings;
> - Single listing of DV trials or prioritisation of DV cases where multiple trials are listed.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Existing fast-track systems should also consider clustering to ensure trained and dedicated staff, with wrap-around services, for all hearings;
> - Trial-only courts should consider methods to ensure trained and dedicated staff, with wrap-around services, are provided for all hearings;
> - Links with Crown Courts to be considered.

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[33] Fast track systems (FTS) exist where DV cases proceed through the court system according to a quicker set of time scales compared to a non DV case. Cluster SDVC group together DV cases for specific sessions. These usually include pre-trial reviews, remands, pleas, sentencing and even specific sessions for trials.

7.6.1 Evidence from the six visits suggested that the type of listing adopted can have a significant impact on the success of the whole approach to DV cases in the magistrates' courts.

> *Speed of process is clearly uppermost in the thinking through the processes of all agencies. Adjournments in the SDVC are usually kept to a minimum in number and length to ensure cases are dealt with swiftly. (SDVC A)*

7.6.2 Although fast track systems ensured that DV trials were listed within a shorter time frame than non-DV cases, they did not demonstrate success in bringing perpetrators to justice.

7.6.3 SDVCs that solely heard trials risk losing the focus on the victim by the time the case reached trial. One of the trials–only SDVCs visited faced delays because of victim non-attendance and the lack of a streamlined system to monitor this prior to the day. In the same SDVC there was no wrap-around support for another victim until the day of the trial and even then only in part. Issues such as special measures and victim summonsing had not been addressed prior to the trial date and the general picture was a lack of any focus on the support for victims and their encouragement to engage with the court process.  In terms of CPS 'successful outcomes' this was one of the lower performing areas.

7.6.4 In trials-only SDVCs, with no trained personnel prior to the trials or support for victims, there is also a significant risk that the victim safety will not be considered carefully enough, by all agencies, throughout each stage of the court process. For example, there may be inappropriate, continuing bail conditions or ineffective outcomes on breaches of bail. Even where an offender has been convicted in a trials-only court, it would be unlikely that they would be sentenced on that occasion and the pre-sentence report may come back before a non-DV trained Bench or District Judge.

7.6.5 Courts that have a sufficient throughput to cluster cases into a specific DV listing (i.e. an allocated day or possibly half a day) can ensure that there are trained and dedicated personnel from all agencies.  Police officers and IDVAs can attend and where possible deal with queries that arise on the day.  A dedicated DV trained Bench or District Judge will be fully conversant with the context of the issues.

> *In one of the SDVCs, when sentencing a defendant on a different occasion to the trial, the prosecution read the facts to the court.  The legal adviser then read the magistrates' reasons from the trial prior to mitigation being heard, so there was no ambiguity about the basis on which the defendant had been convicted. (SDVC D)*

7.6.6 In one of the SDVCs visited, IDVAs identified that the cluster court, staffed by dedicated personnel was a source of reassurance to victims needing to give evidence.  In another cluster system, more victims were attending court and the cases were getting through more quickly.  Conversely in one of the fast track trial-only systems the IDVA did not have sufficient confidence in the criminal justice process to encourage the victim to continue with the prosecution once that victim's safety had been established.

> *In the highest performing SDVC, in relation to successful prosecutions, cases that had to be moved from the cluster court were always transferred to a court where the Bench had DV training. Trials courts always had a DV trained Bench. The same SDVC had introduced local protocols to avoid delays, signed up to and adopted by the criminal justice agencies. These were so successful that they were dovetailed by the Crown Court. (SDVC D)*

7.6.7 One court operated a 'sensitive cases[34]' system where domestic violence cases were heard alongside such as homophobic or racially aggravated crimes. In another area, the SDVC was held in a secure court where the DV list could be combined with other custody cases.

7.6.8 Not all areas have the capacity to single-list DV trials but where this is not possible most areas have guidance to prioritise the DV trials where possible.

> *The concurrent Criminal Justice, Simple, Speedy, Summary (CJSSS) initiative has led to the Crown Prosecution Service in one area developing a local protocol to ensure compatibility and consistency between the initiatives. (SDVC D)*

> *One of the SDVCs raised concerns in relation to statutory charging, identifying significant delays that proved difficult to keep the victim engaged with the court process. However, in another SDVC, through the police agreeing to have a full file within three weeks to comply with a local protocol, there were significant improvements in the timeliness of cases. (SDVC D)*
>
> *In another SDVC, DV trials were being listed within five weeks and the IDVA supported this as appropriate. (SDVC E)*

7.6.9 In two areas the robust listing practices and enquiries into requests for adjournments have led to a culture change in defence attitudes.

## 7.7 COMPONENT 7: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

> **Best practice:**
> - Provision of IDVAs and specialist support services to work with BME communities to provide services and address any significant disproportionality in provision of service;
> - Victim and defendant profile data to be collected to inform performance;
> - The needs of a range of victims, including men, LGBT and disabled victims as well as BME communities, to be addressed.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - SDVCs to address statutory equality duties and draw up equality impact

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[34] Sensitive case courts deal with all hate crimes

> assessments in relation to a range of communities;
> - SDVCs to involve victims from a range of communities in court visits and consultation to improve performance and pubic confidence.

7.7.1  The provision of services to support a range of victims was seen as best practice.
- Four SDVCs provided BME IDVAs, two in Areas with high levels of BME communities and both longer standing court systems that focused on victim support. One of these SDVCs provided work with male victims and links for LGBT victims.
- In one of the SDVCs, a Black and Asian offender referral service is available to look at problems offender managers may not be trained in.

7.7.2  The SDVCs with more successful prosecutions were in Areas with lower levels of BME communities. It was noted that very limited support for other diverse communities was provided by these court systems.

> *An Asian woman who had recently had a child was supported through the criminal justice process after she reported a violent incident perpetrated by her partner. The case was committed for trial at the Crown Court and (as it was a distance from her town) this caused both childcare and travel problems. Arrangements were made for her to give her evidence remotely by live link.*
>
> *Although she had been the victim of an assault occasioning actual bodily harm the judge imposed a community penalty. The victim felt compelled to write a letter outlining her concerns about the penalty after the particularly difficult decisions she had been forced to make in continuing to give evidence, including her social exclusion from her family and community. The letter was passed to the judge in the case who circulated it to his colleagues, helping to raise awareness of some of the issues faced by victims and replied to the victim thanking her for her views.(SDVC D)*

7.7.3  The profiles of victims and defendants was not provided by most SDVCs visited and, where it was, it was not used to inform practice. The necessity of collecting this information and using it to inform practice needs highlighting.


## 7.8   COMPONENT 8: DATA COLLECTION

> **Best practice:**
> - Data collection and analysis by dedicated leads  to inform performance management;
> - Effective performance management systems to inform operational activities.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Success measures and targets to be provided by the National SDVC Steering Group, reflecting CJS targets including both safety and justice;
> - Quality control of data by all agencies;
> - Data breakdown by all agencies into equality profiles to identify and address any potential significant disproportionality in outcomes.

7.8.1 SDVCs with systems to monitor and report back to the partnership on performance also indicated improved performance in prosecutions.

> *Funding had been in place for a post for a data collection process. The information collected was used to monitor performance. This was now much more difficult to achieve as the funding has ceased. (SDVC D)*

7.8.2 One of the SDVCs was using the CJSSS governance to address performance in the SDVC.

7.8.3 Data quality from agencies, other than CPS, was raised by the SDVCs as a difficult issue. Some of the lower performing SDVCs collected data but did not use it to inform practice and report up at a strategic level. Others did not collect local data at all.

## 7.9 COMPONENT 9: COURT FACILITIES

> **Best practice:**
> - Provision of safe entrances, exits and waiting facilities;
> - Links between IDVAs, Witness Service and CPS could ensure early recognition of the need for special measure applications.
>
> **Issues for improvement:**
> - Identification of cases for special measure applications is monitored and any problems addressed.

7.9.1 Over the six areas visited the provision of facilities for domestic violence victims and witnesses reflected the national picture.

> *The location of the court room used near the witness room was identified as a good feature. (SDVC E)*

7.9.2 Even where the location or age of a magistrates' court created restrictions, efforts were being made to provide the best possible accommodation of facilities.

> *The IDVA approaches Witness Service directly, who approach the Crown Prosecution Service to raise any special measures applications. (SDVC D)*

7.9.3 In relation to special measures applications two areas reported a low rate of applications and a third identified that there had previously been limited success with special measures applications. This is something the partnerships were hoping to get their IDVA to address.

> *The Witness Service (WS) and Victim Support work well together in supporting victims through cases. The personnel involved are clearly committed and fully conversant with the issues arising from DV cases. A number of personnel work for both WS and VS and this clearly creates a seamless provision of support for victims and witnesses in DV cases before and after court hearings. WS have*

> *been instrumental in creating an exit survey of victims' experiences with issues raised followed up with the relevant agencies. (SDVC D)*

## 7.10 COMPONENT 10: CHILDREN

**Best practice:**
- Links with children's projects, LCSBs, education, health and family courts to address children's needs;
- Risk assessments that linked into LSCBs to ensure that the safety of all victims was coordinated.

**Issues for improvement:**
- SDVCs need further development of work with children;
- Links with children's work is needed at strategic and operational level;
- Protocols are needed across agencies to address the needs of children.

7.10.1 Effective links between the SDVCs and children's services were difficult to find. Some areas had established links through the IDVAs while others were just beginning to consider this issue.

> *Referral is made to a NSPCC project, Child and adult mental health (CAMH) health team and CAM clinic in the IDVA service. (SDVC A)*
>
> *Links to Education and Health in relation to DV were developing quickly. The LSCB had undertaken to oversee the MARAC. (SDVC C)*

7.10.2 There was a lack of protocols between the SDVC agencies and children's services even where informal referral routes existed.

7.10.3 Links were generally not evidenced at both operational and strategic level.

## 7.11 COMPONENT 11: PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES

**Best practice:**
- Good working relationships across CJS and IDVAs to ensure the referral of appropriate cases to perpetrator programmes;
- Provision of information by IDVAs to Pre-Sentence Report (PSR) writers to ensure the most up-to-date information on victims safety;
- Information on perpetrator programmes included in CJS training sessions.

**Issues for improvement:**
- Capacity issues with NOMS perpetrator programmes;
- Consideration of the links to and use of, voluntary sector perpetrator programmes.

**7.11.1** SDVCs had led to a dramatic increase in referrals to Independent Domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) and Community Domestic Violence Programme (CDVP). In one SDVC visited, the probation area had been able to secure sufficient additional resources to train more programme staff and double the number of programmes being run. Other areas did not have sufficient resources to deal with the increase in demand.

| *The IDVA is contacted for information to feed into all PSRs (SDVC A)* |
|---|

7.11.2 IDAP and CDVP were generally well regarded by the SDVCs. In SDVC B a good working relationship existed between the court and the probation area. As a result the court had a good awareness of the nature of the programme and sufficient time was allowed for standard delivery PSR preparation. This facilitated the referral of appropriate cases to the programme. Where there was a lack of awareness, not all referrals to the programme were appropriate.

| *In one SDVC a module from IDAP had been used in a recent magistrates training session. (SDVC F)* |
|---|

7.11.3 Nine of the SDVCs had voluntary sector programmes in their area and one was fortunate enough to have three, but only five SDVCs were aware that they had these services in their area.
These five provided data and the data was received from a sixth on request.


## 8    CONCLUSION

8.1    In conclusion, it was found that ***those SDVCs exhibiting the best practice addressed all components listed in the National Resource Manual to address both justice and safety. However, it was interesting to note that:***

- The SDVCs that were **more successful in bringing more perpetrators to justice** had:
  - Strong multi-agency partnerships;
  - Effective systems for identification of cases;
  - IDVAs with a focus on supporting victims at court;
  - Good training and dedicated staff;
  - Clustered court listing or a combination of cluster and fast-track court listings; AND,
  - Criminal justice perpetrator programmes.

- The SDVCs that were **more successful in support and safety of victims** had:
  - Strong MARACs;
  - IDVAs focusing on engaging victims generally; AND,
  - Safe court facilities.

8.2    It was therefore clear that omission of any of the core components led to less successful outcomes in one or more of the measures. The combination of the overall components was pivotal in delivering success.

8.3 Within the Review three components were identified where there were **systemic weaknesses**:
- In the SDVCs with a lower proportion of successful prosecutions there was a higher proportion of BME defendants, indicating a need for a focus on equality and diversity to address all success measures;
- All SDVCs need to address their performance through data collection and analysis to see where improvements are needed to meet all success measures;
- All SDVCs need to address children issues.

8.4 Finally, SDVCs that formed part of a broader Coordinated Community Response provided better support and safety for victims.

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

**It is recommended that:**

1. **SDVCs review their practice and processes in light of this review and identify and implement issues for improvement where necessary;**
2. **The National Resource Manual is revised to reflect the findings of this review;**
3. **All SDVCs are requested to ensure all components of the National Resource Manual are adhered to; and,**
4. **The National SDVC Steering Group draws up proposals for the future SDVC programme.**

**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| BME | Black and minority ethnic |
| BPTJ | Bringing Perpetrators to Justice |
| CAADA | Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse |
| CCR | Co-ordinated Community Response to tackling domestic violence |
| CDRP | Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership |
| CDVP | Community Domestic Violence Programme – Probation Perpetrator Programme |
| CENTREX | Police and CPS training programme, "Responses to Domestic Violence". |
| CJS | Criminal Justice System |
| CMS | CPS Case Management System within COMPASS |
| COMPASS | CPS data collection system |
| Court Listing | Arrangements for cases to be heard in court |
| CPS | Crown Prosecution Service |
| CSP | Community Safety Partnerships |
| DV | Domestic Violence |
| DVU | Domestic Violence Unit |
| HMCS | Her Majesty's Courts Service |
| HR | High risk of further domestic abuse |
| IDAP | Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme – Probation Perpetrator Programme |
| IDVA | Independent Domestic Violence Advisor |
| LCJB | Local Criminal Justice Board |
| LGBT | Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, transgender |
| LSCB | Local Safeguarding Children Boards |
| MAPPA | Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements |
| MARAC | Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference |
| SDVC | Specialist Domestic Violence Court System |
| Special Measures | Facilities available, in particular circumstances, to assist witnesses giving evidence in court |
| VHR | Very high risk of further domestic abuse |
| VPS | Victim Personal Statement |
| VS | Victim Support |
| WCU | Witness Care Unit |
| WMS | CPS Witness Management System within COMPASS |
| WS | Witness Support |

**ANNEX A:  LIST OF 23 SPECIALIST DV COURTS**

| Area | Specialist DV courts |
|---|---|
| Avon & Somerset | Bridgwater MC |
| Cambridgeshire | Peterborough MC |
| Cheshire | Runcorn (Halton) MC |
| Derbyshire | Derby MC |
| Devon & Cornwall | Exeter MC; Plymouth MC |
| Durham | Consett MC; Peterlee MC; Newton Aycliffe MC |
| Greater Manchester | Salford MC; Wigan MC |
| Gwent | Caerphilly MC |
| Hampshire | Alton MC |
| Merseyside | Wirral MC |
| Metropolitan & City | Croydon MC; West London MC |
| South Wales | Cardiff MC; Neath MC; Pontypridd MC |
| Staffordshire | Burton Upon Trent MC; Newcastle Upon Lyme MC |
| West Midlands | Wolverhampton |
| West Yorkshire | Leeds MC |

**ANNEX B - NATIONAL RESOURCE MANUAL – KEY COMPONENTS**

The National Resource Manual was produced by the National SDVC Steering Group, with advice from an Expert Panel. It was first published in March 2006 and identified 11 key components essential to the successful operation of an SDVC:

*Component One: Multi-agency partnerships with protocols*

Effective multi-agency partnerships are based on a clear understanding of responsibilities and co-ordination of partner contribution, outlined in a protocol. Initial coordination is best managed by a project manager, through a strategic steering group with an operational group that acts as a case management system. Information sharing protocols are also recommended.

*Component Two: Multi-agency risk assessment and risk management procedures for victims, perpetrators and children*

Individual agencies within SDVCs should have risk assessment tools. Each SDVC should have a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference panel (MARAC) to coordinate the risk assessments of the victims. Strategic connections should be made between DV (MARACs), public protection mechanisms (MAPPAs) and child protection panels (Local Safeguarding Children Boards).

*Component Three: Identification of cases*

SDVCs should work to a common definition. The identification of DV, wherever it becomes apparent, is an essential aspect of any activity to combat this crime. All agencies are required to have identification systems in place that link across cases.

*Component Four: Specialist Domestic Violence Support Services*

The provision of specialist DV support services (Independent DV Advisors) are critical for supporting the victims and essential to the effective working of the SDVCs.

*Component Five: Trained and Dedicated[35] Criminal Justice Staff*

Provision of dedicated staff especially from the police, CPS and, where possible court personnel, is recommended. The training of staff from all agencies in the specialised nature of DV, using national accredited training materials, is an important element in the success of SDVCs.

*Component Six: Court Listing Considerations*

Adopting a particular listing practice within an SDVC enables all Criminal Justice and voluntary agencies to adapt and focus their resources to maximum effect. Fast tracking[36] or cluster courts[37] are encouraged.

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[35] "Dedicated" refers to posts allocated to specifically work in the SDVC system. For cluster courts this would be in the SDVC session.

[36] Fast track systems (FTS) exist whereDV cases proceed through the court system according to a quicker set of time scales compared to a non DV case.

### *Component Seven: Equality and Diversity Issues*

SDVCs need to address good practice in relation to a range of equality and diversity issues covering at least ethnicity, gender, disability and sexuality. The support services and monitoring of defendant and victim profiles is recommended.

### *Component Eight: Data Collection and Monitoring*

Quantitative data collection is recommended for all SDVC agencies, to monitor the SDVC performance.

### *Component Nine: Court Facilities*

Safe court facilities can play an important role in improving the court experience for victims of domestic violence. Separate entrances, waiting facilities and special measures facilities are encouraged.

### *Component Ten: Children's Services*

Under the Children Act 2004, the leadership role of the Director of Children's Services covers all children in their locality, including those in DV circumstances. Links to children's services are recommended.

### Component 11: *Community- based Perpetrator Programmes*

Programmes for suitable male perpetrators currently supervised by the probation service are provided throughout the National Probation Service in England and Wales. There are community-based perpetrator programmes being run outside the CJS.

The core focus of interventions with DV perpetrators, both within the CJS and outside CJS, should always be the safety of those at risk from their violence and abuse predominantly women and children.

### Other services:

Since the Resource Manual was produced, further sections have been included, recommending other services for victims – ranging from support through the Primary Care Trusts, Sexual Assault Referral Centres, Drug and Alcohol services, Sanctuary schemes and other housing support.

*Full details on all the components are available at*
[www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence59.htm](www.crimereduction.gov.uk/domesticviolence/domesticviolence59.htm)

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[37] Cluster SDVC group together DV cases for specific sessions. These usually include pre-trial reviews, remands, pleas, sentencing and even specific sessions for trials.