

Is It Possible for the Police to Predict and Prevent Domestic Murder?

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Abstract

Domestic homicide, particularly intimate partner homicide (IPH), represents one of the most severe outcomes of domestic abuse, claiming hundreds of lives annually in the UK. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), in the year ending March 2022, 96 women and 21 men were killed by a partner or ex-partner, underscoring the urgent need for effective prevention strategies (ONS, 2022). Despite advances in policing, risk assessment tools, and public awareness campaigns, domestic homicide rates remain persistently high, reflecting systemic gaps in prediction and intervention mechanisms. This paper critically examines the predictive and preventive potential of existing tools, such as the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour-Based Violence) risk assessment form, alongside other policing strategies like Clare's Law and pro-arrest policies. While these approaches aim to reduce domestic abuse and homicide, the study highlights their limited effectiveness and the disproportionate burden they place on victims to seek protection and engage with law enforcement. By integrating theoretical perspectives, including feminist and sociological frameworks, the study examines the structural inequalities and behavioural dynamics that underpin IPH. The paper focuses on three key objectives: identifying limitations in current predictive models, proposing systemic reforms to enhance prevention, and exploring the role of multi-agency collaboration in mitigating risk. Additionally, it emphasises the importance of addressing intersectional factors, such as ethnicity, class, and gender, in understanding and responding to domestic homicide. In doing so, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing efforts to reduce domestic homicide rates and promote safer communities.

Keywords: *Intimate Partner Homicide, Risk Assessment, Domestic Violence Prevention Coercive Control, Multi-Agency Collaboration.*

The DASH Form: An Essential but Imperfect Tool

Risk assessment plays a crucial role in preventing intimate partner homicide, yet the tools designed to identify high-risk cases often fall short in practice. One of the most widely used frameworks in the UK is the Domestic Abuse, Stalking, and Honour-Based Violence (DASH) risk assessment form, introduced in 2009 as part of the national strategy to improve victim identification and protection. This tool provides a structured, 27-question framework that police officers use during domestic abuse callouts, assessing key risk factors such as prior incidents of violence, coercive control, mental health issues, and substance misuse (Almond et al., 2017). The form categorises risk levels as standard, medium, or high, guiding law enforcement on appropriate safeguarding measures.

Despite its systematic approach, research has raised concerns about the DASH form's ability to predict which cases will escalate into fatal violence. A study conducted in the Thames Valley by Thornton (2017) examined data from 2011 to 2015 and found that none of the 118 victims of domestic murder or near-murder had been classified as "high-risk" before the fatal or near-fatal incident. Meanwhile, nearly 3,000 domestic abuse cases were flagged as high-risk but did not result in homicide or severe injury (Thornton, 2017; Chalkley & Strang, 2017). This discrepancy raises significant questions about the accuracy and reliability of the DASH form in identifying cases most at risk of lethal escalation.

Some researchers argue that while the DASH form identifies broad risk factors, it does not necessarily translate into an effective predictive tool (Almond et al., 2017). Risk, particularly in domestic abuse cases, is dynamic and context-dependent, meaning that a standardised checklist may not capture the complex interpersonal dynamics that often precede homicide. One key limitation is the form's inability to adequately assess coercive control. This behaviour is widely recognised as a precursor to serious violence but may not be explicitly disclosed by victims or fully understood by frontline officers (Thornton, 2017).

Challenges in Application and Victim Engagement

The effectiveness of the DASH form is also undermined by inconsistent application across police forces. Studies show that officers frequently deviate from the

scripted questions, preferring informal discussions with victims (Robinson et al., 2016). While this can sometimes foster greater trust and openness, it also introduces assessment variability, making it challenging to ensure standardised risk evaluations. Even small linguistic changes in questioning can influence a victim's response; for example, using the word "assault" instead of "injure" may lead to different levels of disclosure (Loftus & Palmer, 1974). Such inconsistencies weaken the reliability and validity of the DASH form as a national risk assessment tool.

Another key challenge is the high-pressure environment in which police officers operate. Domestic abuse cases are often treated as routine callouts, and officers—facing high caseloads and resource limitations—may feel pressured to complete risk assessments quickly rather than comprehensively (Robinson et al., 2016). This rushed approach reduces the accuracy of assessments, as victims may not feel safe or comfortable providing full disclosure in the limited time available. Research suggests that victims who feel unheard or dismissed by police may withhold crucial details, leading to misclassification of risk levels and missed opportunities for early intervention (Ariza et al., 2016).

Victim engagement is another critical issue. Many survivors, particularly those in long-term abusive relationships, are reluctant to disclose the full extent of their experiences due to fear of retaliation, emotional dependency, or social and cultural pressures (Kim et al., 2020). Male victims face additional barriers, as stigma and fear of disbelief may prevent them from fully engaging in the risk assessment process (Hine et al., 2020). Similarly, victims from culturally diverse backgrounds may struggle with additional complexities, including language barriers, immigration concerns, or family expectations, all of which can limit their willingness to engage with law enforcement (Kim et al., 2020). When victims provide incomplete or misleading accounts, the DASH form fails to reflect the true severity of their situation, making it less effective in guiding appropriate safeguarding measures.

The Need for Enhanced Training and Systemic Reform

The effectiveness of the DASH form is closely linked to police training and organisational culture. Officers must be equipped not only with technical knowledge of how to administer the assessment but also with an understanding of the nuances of domestic abuse, including coercive control, mental health intersections, and socio-

cultural barriers (Kim et al., 2020). Improved training would ensure that officers apply the DASH form consistently while also being attuned to non-verbal cues and patterns of abuse that may not be immediately disclosed.

Systemic changes are also necessary. High caseloads and limited resources often result in high-risk cases being prioritised over medium-risk cases, despite research suggesting that homicide often emerges from cases initially classified as lower risk. Solutions such as additional staffing, specialised domestic abuse units, and ongoing supervision could help mitigate officer workload, ensuring that risk assessments are conducted thoroughly rather than as a procedural task.

Ultimately, the challenges associated with the DASH form highlight broader systemic and procedural flaws in police responses to domestic abuse. While risk assessment tools play a crucial role in identifying high-risk cases, their effectiveness is contingent on how they are implemented, interpreted, and acted upon by law enforcement. Addressing these issues requires a combination of enhanced police training, organisational reform, and a victim-centred approach to risk assessment. By standardising the application of the DASH form and improving victim cooperation strategies, police forces can enhance the reliability and effectiveness of this critical tool in preventing intimate partner homicide.

Clare's Law: Empowering Victims or Shifting Responsibility?

Clare's Law, formally known as the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), was introduced in 2014 following the murder of Clare Wood by a partner with a known history of domestic abuse. The scheme aims to provide individuals with access to information about a partner's history of violence, operating through two mechanisms: the "Right to Ask", allowing individuals to request such information, and the "Right to Know", enabling police to disclose it proactively if a risk is identified (Home Office, 2020). Designed to empower potential victims, Clare's Law assumes that greater awareness of an abuser's past will help prevent future harm.

Despite its intentions, the scheme faces significant limitations. Many victims of domestic abuse remain unable to leave their partners due to financial dependence, fear of retaliation, emotional attachment, or the effects of coercive control, disclosing past offences is insufficient to guarantee safety (Fitz-Gibbon & Walklate, 2017). A lack

of viable escape routes—rather than a lack of information—is often the greatest barrier to leaving an abusive relationship.

Moreover, Clare’s Law has been criticised for shifting responsibility onto victims. By requiring individuals to seek out information about their partners, the scheme implies that preventing abuse is a personal responsibility rather than a systemic one. Fitz-Gibbon and Walklate (2017) argue that this places the burden on potential victims to “vet” their partners rather than ensuring that law enforcement intervenes effectively before abuse escalates. This approach also fails to account for the psychological and social barriers that often prevent victims from acting on the information they receive (Heron et al., 2022).

Another challenge is the underutilisation of Clare’s Law. Many potential users are unaware of the scheme, while others hesitate to engage with law enforcement due to distrust, fear of retaliation, or doubts about the scheme’s effectiveness (Grace, 2019). Even when disclosures occur, victims may struggle to process the information or take action due to their emotional and financial entanglements.

For Clare’s Law to be more effective, it must be part of a broader victim support system. Information alone is insufficient; victims need direct links to counselling, legal protections, emergency housing, and financial assistance to act on disclosures safely. Increased public awareness, alongside structural reforms ensuring victims receive immediate support following a disclosure, would enhance its effectiveness.

While Clare’s Law represents a step forward in domestic violence prevention, its effectiveness is fundamentally limited by systemic failures. Without adequate support structures, it risks placing unrealistic expectations on victims while doing little to address the broader structural conditions that allow abuse to continue. If the law is to fulfil its intended purpose, it must be embedded within a wider intervention strategy, perpetrator accountability, and comprehensive victim support.

Predicting Domestic Murder: Moving Beyond Risk Factors

Predicting domestic murder remains one of the most complex challenges in combating intimate partner violence. While structured risk assessment tools, such as the DASH form, offer a systematic approach to identifying danger, research consistently highlights their limitations in distinguishing cases that will escalate to homicide. Domestic murder is rarely an isolated event; rather, it results from a pattern

of escalating behaviours, coercive control, and, in some cases, premeditation by the perpetrator.

Monckton-Smith's (2020) research emphasises the importance of recognising behavioural patterns rather than just tallying risk factors. Traditional assessments often focus on broad indicators such as prior violence, substance misuse, or mental health concerns. However, they frequently fail to capture subtle shifts in an abuser's behaviour that signal imminent danger, such as intensified control, abrupt behavioural changes, or evidence of planning for murder.

Coercive control, a key predictor of intimate partner homicide, remains under-prioritised in risk assessments. Research shows that stalking, threats of suicide, and extreme possessiveness are among the strongest predictors of lethal violence (Campbell et al., 2003). However, many high-risk cases do not involve prolonged physical violence before the murder but instead follow an entrapment pattern—where the victim is systematically stripped of autonomy (Stark, 2009; Monckton-Smith, 2020). This suggests that policing strategies must place greater emphasis on coercive control indicators rather than relying solely on previous physical assaults.

Improving risk prediction requires better police training. Officers must be equipped to recognise psychological and behavioural indicators of escalating danger, rather than focusing exclusively on physical violence. Studies indicate that targeted questioning about a perpetrator's surveillance behaviours, increased isolation attempts, or threats of harm can significantly improve risk assessments (Robinson et al., 2016; Ariza et al., 2016). Without such nuanced interrogation, officers may overlook the silent but escalating risks in abusive relationships.

Beyond policing, multi-agency collaboration is critical. No single organisation holds all the information necessary for a comprehensive risk assessment. Healthcare professionals, mental health services, and substance misuse organisations often interact with both victims and perpetrators before law enforcement does. For example, a mental health provider might notice suicidal ideation in an abuser, while a substance misuse service might observe alcohol or drug use patterns that heighten aggression (Daly & Pelowski, 2000). Effective information sharing between agencies can help prevent critical warning signs from being missed.

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) model provides a valuable framework for intervention. MARACs unite law enforcement, social services, and healthcare professionals to develop safeguarding plans for high-risk cases

(Robinson & Tregidga, 2007). However, these conferences primarily focus on cases already classified as high-risk, potentially missing medium-risk cases that could escalate. Expanding MARAC discussions to include cases displaying coercive control and other pre-homicide warning behaviours could help prevent lethal violence.

Technology also has the potential to enhance risk assessments. Machine learning algorithms have demonstrated strong predictive potential in criminal justice settings (Berk et al., 2009). These systems can analyse vast datasets, identifying patterns and risk factors that human assessors might overlook. While ethical concerns around privacy and algorithmic bias must be addressed, such tools could support human decision-making, providing additional layers of analysis for identifying high-risk cases before violence escalates.

Ultimately, predicting domestic murder requires a multi-faceted approach that moves beyond rigid checklists and incorporates behavioural analysis, enhanced training, multi-agency collaboration, and predictive technology. Strengthening risk assessment frameworks while ensuring swift intervention in escalating abuse cases is essential to preventing intimate partner homicide. Without these reforms, the risk of misidentifying threats, overlooking silent warning signs, and failing to act on escalating abuse will continue to undermine prevention efforts.

Multi-Agency Collaboration and Information Sharing

Preventing domestic murder requires a coordinated approach, where multiple agencies share responsibility for identifying and responding to risk. Domestic violence rarely occurs in isolation—many perpetrators interact with healthcare providers, mental health services, or substance misuse professionals before escalating to lethal violence. Despite clear warning signs, crucial information often fails to reach law enforcement or safeguarding bodies, creating dangerous gaps in intervention (Richards et al., 2008; Stark & Hester, 2019).

A significant proportion of domestic murder perpetrators have histories of mental health issues or substance abuse, factors that increase their risk of violent behaviour. Research shows that psychiatric patients experience a high prevalence of domestic violence (Oram et al., 2013), emphasising the need for closer collaboration between mental health services and law enforcement. Similarly, individuals with substance misuse disorders often exhibit increased aggression and impulsivity, escalating

domestic violence risks (Von Wormer & Roberts, 2008). However, limited inter-agency communication prevents a full understanding of risk, leaving victims vulnerable.

Seamless information-sharing between agencies is essential. Victims frequently feel safer disclosing abuse to healthcare providers than the police, particularly when they distrust law enforcement or fear retaliation from their abuser (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2021). Social services, housing authorities, and domestic abuse charities often possess critical insights into coercive control, financial dependency, and cultural barriers that may not be immediately apparent in police assessments (Humphreys & Stanley, 2015). When agencies fail to share this information, victims may slip through the cracks, receiving fragmented support that does little to protect them from escalating harm.

The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) model offers a proven framework for improving collaboration. MARACs bring together law enforcement, healthcare providers, social services, housing agencies, and domestic abuse charities to coordinate safeguarding plans for high-risk cases (Robinson, 2004). These discussions allow agencies to pool intelligence and develop a holistic response, ensuring a more effective intervention strategy. Evidence suggests MARACs increase the likelihood of early support and significantly reduce homicide risk (Stanley & Humphreys, 2014).

Despite their success, MARACs are often limited to high-risk cases, overlooking medium-risk cases that could escalate without early intervention. Domestic violence follows a predictable trajectory, with warning behaviours such as stalking, financial control, and social isolation often preceding physical violence (Monckton-Smith, 2020). Expanding MARACs to include medium-risk cases could allow agencies to intervene before violence reaches a critical stage, rather than reacting once abuse has escalated to severe harm.

The technology could further enhance multi-agency collaboration by improving the speed and accuracy of information-sharing. Secure digital platforms that allow real-time updates on high-risk individuals would ensure that all relevant agencies have access to critical data, reducing the risk of miscommunication. Advances in machine learning and predictive analytics also offer new opportunities to flag high-risk cases by analysing patterns across police reports, healthcare data, and social services records (Berk et al., 2009). While privacy concerns must be addressed, such tools could

enhance human decision-making by identifying risks that traditional assessments might miss (Berk et al., 2019).

However, significant challenges remain. The effectiveness of MARACs and other multi-agency frameworks is hindered by inconsistent implementation, limited resources, and varying levels of agency participation (Hester, 2011). Many agencies struggle with high caseloads, leading to irregular attendance or superficial engagement in risk assessment meetings (Myhill & Hohl, 2019). Without clear protocols and sustained investment, multi-agency collaboration will remain uneven and inconsistent. Stronger leadership commitments, additional funding, and enhanced training for frontline professionals are essential to ensure that risk assessments are comprehensive and actionable.

Public awareness of MARACs and similar collaborative frameworks is also limited, leaving many victims unaware of the multi-agency support available. Targeted awareness campaigns could help individuals at risk understand how to seek help outside of direct police intervention. A coordinated, multi-agency approach is essential to preventing domestic murder. Strengthening information-sharing between law enforcement, healthcare providers, and social services, expanding MARACs, and leveraging technology could improve early intervention efforts significantly. By ensuring that multiple perspectives inform risk assessments, agencies can shift from reacting to domestic homicide to proactively preventing it. Making multi-agency collaboration the norm rather than the exception is crucial to creating a future where domestic violence prevention is truly proactive.

The Prevention of Domestic Murder

Preventing domestic murder requires a delicate balance between proactive and reactive measures, ensuring victim safety while upholding fundamental human rights. The right to life, protected under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), must take precedence in domestic abuse cases. However, law enforcement must also consider legal complexities, including the offender's rights under Article 8 (private and family life) and Article 3 (protection from inhumane treatment) (McQuigg, 2021). To be effective, preventative actions must be proportionate, justified, and carefully implemented to avoid infringing on rights while prioritising victim safety (Fenwick, 2007).

Pro-Arrest Strategies: A Mixed Approach

One of the most widely used law enforcement strategies is the pro-arrest approach, which encourages officers to take immediate action against suspected abusers. Arrest can deter further violence, force offenders to confront their behaviour, and enable protective measures, such as bail restrictions and restraining orders (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Hester & Westmarland, 2005). However, its effectiveness is not universal. Victims who fear retaliation may view arrest as an escalation rather than a resolution. Additionally, victims who are financially or emotionally dependent on their abuser may experience heightened vulnerability after an arrest (Pais, 2016). These concerns highlight the need for flexibility, ensuring police interventions prioritise victim agency and individual circumstances.

Offender Reform Programmes: Addressing the Root Causes

Beyond immediate intervention, offender rehabilitation plays a crucial role in preventing reoffending. Reform programmes aim to tackle underlying issues, including substance misuse, mental health disorders, and learned abusive behaviours. Studies suggest successful engagement in rehabilitation can reduce recidivism rates (Bennett et al., 2007; Gordon & Moriarty, 2003). However, dropout rates remain high, often due to economic instability, addiction, or resistance to change (Eckhardt et al., 2008). Embedding these initiatives within wider support services, such as mental health treatment and employment assistance, may improve retention and effectiveness (Jewkes, 2002). While no single solution guarantees prevention, targeted rehabilitation programmes are vital in breaking cycles of abuse and reducing long-term risks.

Multi-Agency Coordination: Strengthening Prevention Strategies

Multi-agency collaboration is essential in preventing domestic homicide. Expanding Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) allows agencies to share intelligence, pool resources, and implement comprehensive safeguarding strategies. Evidence suggests MARACs improve victim protection, particularly when

information-sharing is prioritised and victim support services are strengthened (Stanley & Humphreys, 2014). However, multi-agency strategies must also focus on perpetrators. By integrating offender monitoring and mandatory reform programmes, MARACs could play a proactive role in prevention, disrupting escalation before it reaches lethal levels.

Balancing Proactive and Reactive Measures

An effective domestic murder prevention strategy must combine proactive and reactive measures. Proactive approaches, such as early reform programmes and strategic arrests, target behaviours that escalate abuse (Hester & Westmarland, 2005; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). Reactive measures, such as emergency protective orders and enhanced surveillance of high-risk offenders, provide immediate protection for victims in danger (Robinson, 2004; Stanley & Humphreys, 2014). The key to success lies in ensuring these interventions work together, reinforced by robust risk assessment frameworks that allow for targeted, data-driven decision-making (Berk, Sorenson, & Barnes, 2016).

Enhancing Existing Risk Assessment Tools

While tools such as the DASH form and Clare's Law have advanced victim safeguarding, their effectiveness is undermined by inconsistent application and low engagement (Robinson & Tregidga, 2007; Myhill & Hohl, 2016). Future research should explore how emerging technologies can improve risk assessments. Understanding how abusers exploit digital tools—such as surveillance apps, social media, and financial control—could inform new safeguarding measures (Woodlock, 2017). Digital coercion is increasingly recognised as a significant element of coercive control, yet remains underexplored in risk frameworks (Stark, 2007; Monckton-Smith, 2019).

Addressing Structural and Societal Factors

Beyond law enforcement responses, preventing domestic murder requires addressing broader societal conditions. Cultural norms that normalise aggression,

economic instability that traps victims, and systemic inequalities limiting access to support all perpetuate cycles of abuse (Walby, Towers, & Francis, 2016). Long-term prevention must extend beyond policing, incorporating policy initiatives that promote economic empowerment, gender equality, and sustainable community-based support networks (World Health Organisation, 2013). Shifting domestic violence prevention from a reactive to a proactive model could help eliminate the structural conditions that allow abuse to escalate into murder (Oram, Trevillion, Feder, & Howard, 2013).

Discussion

Preventing domestic murder requires balancing early intervention and human rights considerations. While the victim's right to life is paramount, interventions must align with offender rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), including Article 8 (privacy) and Article 3 (protection from inhumane treatment) (McQuigg, 2021). Over-reliance on punitive measures, such as mandatory pro-arrest policies, risks escalating violence rather than preventing it (Fenwick, 2007; Melton, 1999).

This study highlights the need for integrated proactive and reactive strategies (Hamilton et al., 2021). Proactive measures—including offender reform programmes, early risk assessments, and multi-agency collaboration—aim to address risks before escalation. However, with 82% of domestic abuse cases unreported, law enforcement often engages too late (Women's Aid, 2018; Monckton-Smith, 2020). Sole reliance on police intervention leaves significant gaps, especially in cases of coercive control and psychological abuse that may not be immediately classified as high risk.

Pro-arrest policies yield mixed results. While they deter violence and enable protective orders (Hester & Westmarland, 2005; Ng & Douglas, 2016), they can also provoke retaliation in coercively controlled relationships (Stark, 2007; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). Arrest strategies must incorporate risk assessments and restorative justice approaches to ensure victim autonomy while holding offenders accountable (Choi et al., 2012).

Offender reform programmes offer long-term solutions, particularly for those with substance misuse or mental health challenges (Bennett et al., 2007; Gordon & Moriarty, 2003). However, high dropout rates limit their impact, necessitating mandatory participation and multi-agency support (Eckhardt et al., 2008). Embedding

reform initiatives within broader mental health and employment services could improve retention and reduce recidivism (Jewkes, 2002).

Multi-agency collaboration is crucial. MARACs enhance information-sharing across police, social services, healthcare, and victim support organisations, ensuring holistic risk assessments (Robinson, 2004; Stanley & Humphreys, 2014). However, MARACs focus primarily on high-risk cases, leaving many medium-risk cases unaddressed, despite evidence that domestic abuse follows an escalation pattern (Monckton-Smith, 2020). Expanding MARACs to include medium-risk cases would enable earlier intervention and prevent escalation to homicide. Despite their effectiveness, MARACs face systemic barriers such as inconsistent participation, resource constraints, and fragmented communication (Richards et al., 2008; Oram, 2013). Strengthening data-sharing platforms and securing sustained funding are essential for improving coordination.

Emerging challenges, particularly digital abuse, demand modernised risk assessments. Technology is increasingly used for coercive control—including surveillance apps, financial restrictions, and online harassment—yet remains underexamined in risk assessment models (Woodlock, 2017). Future research should explore predictive analytics and digital intervention tools while ensuring safeguards against bias in predictive policing. While this study is interpretivist in approach, incorporating primary research (e.g., interviews with police officers, survivors, and frontline workers) could deepen understanding. Future studies should evaluate the long-term impact of pro-arrest policies, offender reform programmes, and expanded MARAC interventions.

Conclusion

Preventing domestic murder requires proactive and reactive measures, ensuring law enforcement and support agencies intervene before violence escalates (Monckton-Smith, 2019; Myhill & Hohl, 2016). Proactive approaches—including offender reform programmes and early risk identification—are key to disrupting abuse patterns before they turn lethal (Hester & Westmarland, 2005). However, these strategies must be reinforced with protective orders, enhanced surveillance, and crisis intervention for those at immediate risk (Stanley & Humphreys, 2014).

Multi-agency collaboration must be strengthened. Expanding MARACs and improving information-sharing can prevent high-risk cases from escalating (Robinson & Tregidga, 2007; Richards, Letchford, & Stratton, 2008). However, MARACs require sustained funding, consistent participation, and improved communication to maximise impact. Additionally, victim and offender support services, such as safe housing, financial aid, and mental health support, are essential to long-term safety and rehabilitation (Oram, Trevillion, Feder, & Howard, 2013).

While law enforcement plays a critical role, addressing the societal conditions enabling domestic violence remains crucial. Cultural norms, economic instability, and systemic barriers contribute to the continuation of abuse cycles (Walby, Towers, & Francis, 2016; WHO, 2013). Without tackling these root causes, efforts to prevent domestic homicide will remain incomplete.

Despite challenges, a coordinated, evidence-based approach can create meaningful change. By enhancing risk assessments, improving collaboration, and strengthening systemic support, domestic violence prevention can move from a reactive to a proactive model (Stark, 2007; Woodlock, 2017). Through innovative approaches and policy reforms, law enforcement and support services can work together to prevent domestic homicide and save lives.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations aim to enhance the ability of police and partner agencies to predict and prevent intimate partner homicide.

1. Enhanced Officer Training in Risk Assessment

Police officers require continuous, evidence-based training to improve their ability to identify and respond to high-risk domestic abuse cases. Training should focus on coercive control, escalating violence, and key behavioural indicators of lethal risk (Robinson et al., 2016; Monckton-Smith, 2020). In addition to DASH form training, officers should develop skills in interpreting non-verbal cues and victim reluctance, which may signal hidden risks (Thornton, 2017). Cultural competence training should also be prioritised to ensure officers understand how socio-cultural factors affect victims' willingness to disclose abuse (Hine et al., 2020).

2. Strengthening Multi-Agency Collaboration

A Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) model should be expanded regionally, integrating police, healthcare, social services, and mental health agencies to improve information-sharing and response coordination (Bridger et al., 2017). Secure, centralised digital platforms should enable real-time risk updates, addressing communication gaps hindering effective safeguarding (Richards et al., 2008; Oram, 2013).

3. Expanding Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)

The scope of MARACs should be broadened to include medium-risk cases, recognising that domestic abuse often escalates unpredictably (Stanley & Humphreys, 2014). Additionally, MARACs should incorporate offender-focused strategies, such as monitoring high-risk perpetrators and mandating participation in reform programmes (Monckton-Smith, 2020).

4. Implementing Mandatory Domestic Violence Offender Reform Programmes

Early intervention is crucial in disrupting patterns of domestic abuse. Offender rehabilitation programmes should be mandatory, with tailored interventions addressing addiction, mental health issues, and learned abusive behaviours (Gordon & Moriarty, 2003). Integrating trauma-informed approaches and multi-agency support structures will improve retention rates and effectiveness (Jewkes, 2022; Eckhardt et al., 2008).

5. Contextual Application of Pro-Arrest Policies

Pro-arrest policies should be applied selectively, ensuring risk assessments consider potential retaliatory violence, particularly in coercive control cases (Stark, 2007; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). Restorative justice approaches, alongside pro-arrest measures, may offer victims greater autonomy, reducing the risk of escalating conflict while maintaining accountability (Choi et al., 2012). Clear guidelines should ensure that arrests are consistently followed by protective orders, bail conditions, or restraining orders (Ng & Douglas, 2016).

6. Routine Audits and Continuous Evaluation of Risk Tools

To ensure the DASH form and Clare's Law remain effective, police forces should conduct regular audits and independent evaluations, partnering with academic researchers for evidence-based refinements (Sharp-Jeffs & Kelly, 2016). Evaluations should focus on identifying systemic barriers, including resource limitations and inconsistencies in application across police forces.

7. Increasing Public Awareness and Accessibility of Clare's Law

Greater public awareness campaigns should target communities with high rates of domestic abuse, using digital platforms, community organisations, and healthcare professionals to disseminate information (Grace, 2019). Additionally, simplifying the Clare's Law application process would remove bureaucratic barriers, increasing accessibility for at-risk victims.

8. Strengthening Victim Support Networks

Victim safety and empowerment should be prioritised through expanded support services:

- Increased funding for domestic violence shelters and emergency housing, with culturally appropriate support (Walby et al., 2016).
- Legal aid services to help victims navigate restraining orders, child custody disputes, and financial abuse recovery.
- Access to trauma counselling and financial empowerment programmes, addressing key barriers to escaping abusive relationships (Fitz-Gibbon & Walklate, 2017; Gadd et al., 2019).

9. Leveraging Emerging Technologies for Prevention

Technology presents both risks and opportunities in domestic violence prevention:

- Predictive analytics should be integrated into police risk assessment tools to identify high-risk cases using data from police reports, healthcare providers, and social services (Berk et al., 2009).
- Digital tracking tools could monitor high-risk offenders while ensuring compliance with privacy laws (Woodlock, 2017).

These recommendations provide a comprehensive framework for improving the police response to intimate partner homicide, ensuring a data-driven, victim-centred, and multi-agency approach. By prioritising early intervention, targeted risk assessments, offender rehabilitation, and improved collaboration, law enforcement can move beyond reactive policing and work towards preventing domestic murder before it occurs.

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