

INTRODUCTION

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimates that 2.4 million adults (1.7 million women and 699,000 men) experience domestic abuse¹. The cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales for the year ending 31 March 2017 is estimated to be approximately £66 billion².

When we co-founded the Domestic Abuse (DA) Alliance in 2019, we had a clear vision to make a positive and meaningful contribution to tackling the epidemic of abuse in the UK.

We could see the extended length of time it took victims of domestic abuse to access legal assistance and protection. This process could often take up to two weeks, and sometimes even longer once a referral had been made to a specialist support service and appropriate local legal support secured.

That's why we created WEPROTECT – an immediate referral pathway to professional, competent, and compassionate legal support for anyone experiencing abuse. With WEPROTECT we've reduced the victim-contacting timeline to a matter of hours, sometimes even minutes.

Today, five UK police forces and several specialist support service providers are using WEPROTECT to make referrals to the DA Alliance to help victims secure the legal support they need to escape abuse.

In this, the first of our new stakeholder briefings, we have included some background information on the DA Alliance and our WEPROTECT referral service, in addition to some updates on our current activities.

We are proud to share that WEPROTECT is the only referral service of its kind to be selected for independent evaluation by the University of Birmingham, through the Home Office What Works Fund. This 30-month study, which is already underway, will assess the impact of WEPROTECT in reducing re-victimisation, and the mental health burden on survivors. It will also include an economic analysis of the service.

Another major focus for us at present is on supporting our police referral partners to improve their compliance in processing non-molestation orders (NMOs), by helping them reduce the time it takes to upload these details onto the Police National Computer (PNC) so that officers can easily identify if a court order is in place.

On behalf of the team here at the DA Alliance, we hope that you find the information in this briefing useful. If you would like any further information, or did not receive this briefing directly and would like to be included in the distribution for future briefings, please email: partners@domestic-abuse.co.uk



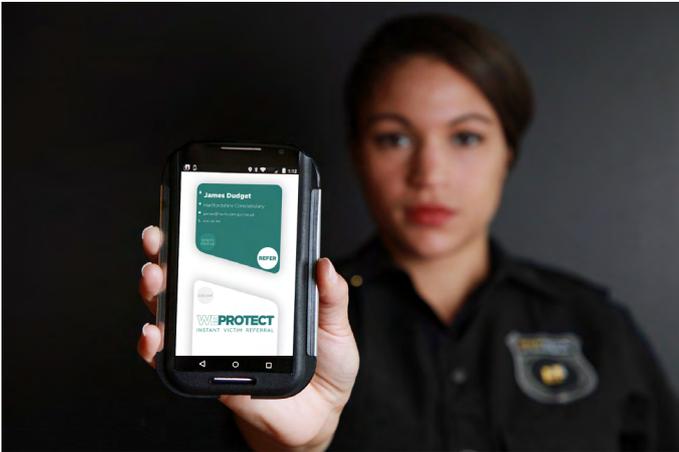
Razi Hassan

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS
Domestic Abuse Alliance

1. Office for National Statistics Domestic abuse in England and Wales overview: November 2022

2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse>

ACCELERATING ACCESS TO LEGAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION



The free-to-use WEPROTECT app, and the WEPROTECT online portal, have been developed in partnership with police and specialist support service providers. The WEPROTECT app is available to download on Android and Apple devices, via Google Play and the App Store. You can make referrals via our [website](#) and we also operate a telephone helpline for victims.

Referrals can only be made to the DA Alliance with the consent of the victim, and consent can be withdrawn at any time. We undertake to contact every victim referred via WEPROTECT within 24 hours, and often this can be within a matter of minutes.

Our team of experienced call handlers and case workers help demystify the legal process and share publicly available information about victims' legal rights and options. Where a protective order is required, we prepare the necessary casework and the solicitors' firms in our Legal Partner Network provide local representation in court.

All the law firms in our Legal Partner Network are members of The Law Society and are regulated by the SRA. They are recognised as specialists in domestic abuse matters and Family Law. They can also assist with Immigration and Employment matters. Our Legal Partner Network is open to all firms to join but each partner must sign up to our Q+ standard - to deliver a prompt, attentive and compassionate service to anyone referred to them by the DA Alliance.

When you make a referral to the DA Alliance you will be kept updated – via automated email alerts – throughout the victim's legal journey, so you can follow the progress and conclusion of the matter. Access to the WEPROTECT portal is provided to referral partners so you can view, at a glance, the status of all referrals made by your organisation, in real-time. Your customised dashboard provides management information so you can monitor service performance and victim engagement throughout the legal process.

Given the current delays victims face in criminal proceedings, coupled with low conviction rates across all cases of abuse, securing civil legal protection can enable a survivor to feel safe again and begin the process of healing from their trauma.

IMPROVING POLICE COMPLIANCE IN PROCESSING NMOs

A recent HMICFRS report into the police use of protective measures referenced the positive impact of WEPROTECT by Hertfordshire Police. The report also recommended that Chief Constables should review their policy on how their police force processes notifications on NMOs, so officers can easily identify if a NMO exists, and ensure officers are aware of referral pathways to third-party support organisations, such as the DA Alliance, to protect domestic abuse victims.

WEPROCESS, our automated and integrated process-serving system, is helping police forces to improve compliance in processing NMOs by reducing the time it takes for court orders to be uploaded to the PNC. Copies of court orders and statements of service can be viewed and retrieved through the WEPROTECT portal and supplied directly to Police Force Records Bureaux.

BRIDGING THE GAP IN LANGUAGE SUPPORT FOR ABUSE VICTIMS

Research carried out by Victim Support has highlighted gaps in language support for victims who speak English as a second language. Our WETRANSLATE service provides access to interpretation and translation capabilities in over 200 spoken languages, either remotely or face to face. If a victim is eligible for legal aid then the cost for interpretation or translation may be met by the Legal Aid Agency.

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF THE WEPROTECT SERVICE



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Our own research and feedback mechanisms have shown that civil legal protection can help victims to escape abuse. A recent service assessment of the impact of the DA Alliance in Cambridgeshire revealed:

- 72% of victims (for whom the DA Alliance had helped secure a court order) were no longer suffering from abuse.
- 86% of victims were satisfied with the service provided by the DA Alliance.
- 74% of victims were satisfied with the service provided by their appointed solicitor.

These findings are now being verified by the Home Office, who has awarded What Works grant funding to The University of Birmingham to complete an independent evaluation of WEPROTECT. This study will look at the impact of WEPROTECT on reducing re-victimisation and the mental health burden on survivors. An economic analysis will determine if there are likely to be important cost implications for the public sector and society more broadly in improving domestic abuse re-victimisation rates of the DA and mental health outcomes.

Two Metropolitan Police Forces will trial WEPROTECT as part of the evaluation and the research findings will be shared with national stakeholders.

PROTECTING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

The WEPROTECT app has already been rolled out by Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Humberside and Sussex Police as well as several IDVA services and charities who support survivors of domestic abuse.

We are also exploring how we can establish pathways to legal support at the earliest possible opportunity, and before domestic abuse becomes a police matter. This early intervention and prevention work involves engaging Employers, Education Providers,

Mental Health Services, Social Care Teams and other community-based services that are in a position to spot the signs of abuse and signpost victims to appropriate support.

To date we have managed over 20,000 referrals from frontline services and helped to secure almost 2,000 protection orders on behalf of victims of domestic abuse. Over 3,000 users are already registered on the WEPROTECT app.



Creating a safer
Cambridgeshire



BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE



**CUMBRIA
CONSTABULARY**



**HERTFORDSHIRE
CONSTABULARY**



Hertfordshire Partnership University
NHS Foundation Trust



For women and children.
Against domestic violence.

FURTHER INFORMATION

FOLLOW US:    

CALL:

To speak to one of our experienced call handlers
Tel: 0800 101 7110

VISIT:

The DA Alliance website for more information about WEPROTECT and to make an online referral:
<https://domestic-abuse.co.uk>