



NSW Police Force

Domestic and Family Violence Policy



This policy overrides any previous Corporate or Local Area Command Domestic and Family Violence Policy and Standing Operating Procedures.

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THE POLICY STATEMENT

The NSW Police Force regards all personal violence crimes, in particular crimes against women and children, and the elderly, as serious and damaging to individuals, families and to our community.

Domestic and family violence offences may result in criminal charges and will not be tolerated. These offences and crimes cause significant trauma to the victims, their families and communities.

The NSW Police Force encourages police to give the strongest consideration to arrest offenders of domestic and family violence. The safety, protection and wellbeing of victims are of paramount concern to police.

The NSW Police Force enforces a pro prosecution response to the investigation and management of domestic and family violence. Charges will be laid against offenders where evidence exists to support criminal charges.

The NSW Police Force enforces a pro victim support response to domestic and family violence and will ensure appropriate protective measures are taken to keep victims safe and prevent further violence against them.

Domestic and family violence is recognised as a child protection issue and all police will be proactive in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as mandatory reporters of children and young people at risk of significant harm; and complying with the NSW Police Force policy to report children present in the home at the time of any domestic and family violence incident to the Child Wellbeing Unit.

If a child has been abused, or is in need of protection from the offender, police must make an application for an Apprehended Violence Order.

The community in which police serve represents a community diverse in indigenous, cultural, religious, gender, language, social, sexuality, ability and age differences. Police must consider understanding, and recognition of these differences when responding to victims of domestic and family violence, perpetrators of this crime and the families affected.

The NSW Police Force recognises the prevention of crime as a family, community and whole of government responsibility. The NSW Police Force supports, encourages and will continue to work in partnership with other agencies to deliver coordinated effective services to victims, offenders and their families.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the Policy is:

- *To inform police personnel and the wider community of the police priorities and principles of providing comprehensive services in responding to victims of domestic and family violence, and to reduce rates of violent crime.*

Aims of the Policy

- To provide police with information that will ensure consistency in the investigation and management of domestic and family violence crimes.
- To protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people who are exposed to domestic and family violence by giving direction to police to recognise domestic and family violence as a child protection issue, and to ensure their protection through the use of protective orders.
- To support and promote a coordinated, multi-agency response to domestic and family violence.

Policy objectives

The specific objectives of the Policy are to:

1. Clearly communicate the NSW Police Force policy position and commitment to the safety, protection and wellbeing of victims of domestic and family violence as being of paramount concern in all domestic and family violence investigations.
2. Provide clear direction to NSW Police Force employees to ensure they understand their responsibilities as mandatory reporters of children and young people suspected of being at risk of serious physical or psychological harm as a result of their exposure to domestic and family violence.
3. Reinforce the commitment of the NSW Police Force as lead government agency in responding to domestic and family violence, to work together with key interagency partners to achieve joint outcomes for victims, their families and communities, and to work together to improve domestic and family violence service responses.
4. Provide a good practice framework for the development of systems, guidelines, education and SOPs in relation to all aspects of domestic and family violence.

Definitions

For the purpose of the Policy definitions are taken from section 3 of the Crimes (*Domestic and Personal Violence*) Act 2007. Section 11 defines a domestic violence offence as follows:

“Domestic violence offence means a personal violence offence committed by a person against another person with whom the person who commits the offence has or has had a domestic relationship.”

Gendered language

A 2004 study by the NSW Bureau of Crime, Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), showed that in NSW, 80.4% of offenders of domestic assault incidents reported to the police, were men. The statistics for partner relationships show that males assaulted 95% of female victims. Therefore the language used throughout the Policy generally refers to men as the offenders of domestic and family violence, and women as the victims. It is acknowledged however that police encounter victims and offenders of both genders.

While the overwhelming majority of AVO applications are made by women against their male partners, or ex-partners, this does not preclude domestic and family violence occurring within same sex or other domestic relationships; including where domestic and family violence occurs between family members, as well as where children are the offenders.

Generally speaking however, victims of domestic and family violence who report to police are usually female, while offenders are usually male.

Introduction

Domestic and Family Violence is a Crime

Domestic and family violence involves an abuse of power, mainly perpetrated by men in an intimate partner relationship or after separating from the relationship. It amounts to a pattern of behaviour that can include:

- escalating levels of abuse and violence
- intimidation
- physical abuse
- verbal abuse and/or threats
- psychological abuse
- threats to harm others, and/or causing harm to pets
- threats to damage property or actually damaging property
- financial deprivation and social isolation
- coercive control in order to maintain control over the victim's behaviour

Police have at their disposal a range of options to enable officers to intervene to protect victims and prevent domestic and family violence. They include:

- making an application for an AVO on behalf of victims
- referrals to support agencies
- development of strategies to deal with repeat victims and repeat offenders
- or in the case of a criminal offence, arresting and charging the offender, or charging for breaches of AVOs.

These options offer protection against many forms of domestic and family violence, including acts that are not physically violent.

Domestic and family violence is an area of considerable legal and social complexity. All police officers working with victims of domestic and family violence need to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in ensuring victim safety and reducing the level of violent crime in our communities. Domestic and family violence requires a high standard of professional investigation that can lead to more effective prosecutions. The importance of gathering forensic and other evidence helps avoid the over reliance upon the victim's willingness and capacity to testify in court.

The investigation of domestic and family violence is complex due to the unpredictability, interpersonal nature of incident/s, and associated risk factors for police and victims.

Due also to the recidivist nature of domestic violence police need to be thorough in assessing the future level of protection for victims when investigating domestic and family violence. Research has shown that the context, type of abuse and number of incidents of domestic violence does provide predictors of future harm.

Policy background

The NSW Police Force has a strong commitment, and a clear responsibility to develop and implement strategies for the detection, investigation and management of domestic and family violence. Police are generally the first to respond to domestic and family violence incidents, and therefore the NSW Police Force has a major responsibility to ensure officers respond appropriately, professionally, consistently and ethically.

This policy has been informed by research on policing practices in other jurisdictions as well as the:

- NSW State Plan
- NSW Ombudsman Report Domestic Violence: improving police practice 2006
- NSW Ombudsman Annual Report - Report of Reviewable Deaths in 2005
- Australasian Policing Strategy for the Prevention and Reduction of Family Violence
- NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women

In addition police have a role in the prevention of domestic and family violence to identify high risk offenders and repeat victims, and to ensure appropriate action is taken to protect the victim and demonstrate that offender behaviour is unacceptable.

Legislation

The primary pieces of legislation which govern police responses to the investigation and management of domestic and family violence are the:

- Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007
- *Crimes Act 1900*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *Young Offenders Act 1997*
- *Criminal Procedure Act 1986*
- *Family Law Act 1975*

The Law Reform Commission commenced a review of Part 15A of the *Crimes Act 1900* in February 2003. The final report was completed in 2005. This review laid the foundation for a number of changes in legislation. On 12 March 2007, amendments to Part 15A of the *Crimes Act* commenced.

The amended *Crimes Act* included an additional category of relationship to recognise that many indigenous people prefer the term “family violence” when talking about domestic violence. This acknowledges that a range of relatives and in laws can be involved, as well as the main person offending and the person subject to the family violence. To keep within the spirit of this amendment the NSW Police Force has included the term “Family” in naming the Policy.

In 2007 the NSW Government introduced new legislation to repeal and re-enact Part 15A of the *Crimes Act* as a principal stand-alone Act, with some modifications. The new Act is called the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007*.

Young offenders

Contrary to popular belief young offenders involved in domestic and family violence may be dealt with under the *Young Offenders Act 1997* depending on the seriousness of the offence, the degree of violence and the harm caused to any victim. These considerations must be balanced against the NSW Police Force proactive stance on domestic violence and community expectations.

The NSW Police Force recognises the advantage of dealing with young offenders involved in domestic and family violence matters under the *Young Offenders Act* to:

- retain family involvement in the process without placing the victim in jeopardy,
- allow young offenders to take responsibility for their offending behaviour and restore the damage done to the victim,
- provide opportunity to address the offending behaviour, and
- decrease the number of young offenders going to court.

Taking out an AVO against a young offender is also appropriate where it is necessary to protect the victim. This will not interfere or affect any action taken under the *Young Offenders Act* such as a caution or a youth justice conference. The AVO will need to include a condition to enable the victim to participate in the conference if applicable.

NOTE: *An offence of breach AVO cannot be dealt with under the Young Offenders Act (pursuant to section 8).*

Links to the State Plan

This Policy together with the SOPs, contributes to the NSW Police Force strategic and operational policing directions, and towards meeting the NSW Government's priorities of reduced rates of crime, especially violent crime. It also links to the Results & Services Plan through the program areas of Community Support and Criminal Investigation.

Under the State Plan, police are the lead agency for the investigation and management of domestic and family violence (Priority R1). As a result police will lead more effective integrated delivery of services to victims and their families in conjunction with other government and non-government agencies.

The role of police in responding to domestic and family violence

Police have five key roles in relation to domestic and family violence. They are to:

1. Investigate incidents of Domestic and Family Violence.
2. Provide safety and support to victims.
3. Bring offenders before the court or apply the *Young Offenders Act* to young offenders where appropriate.
4. Be proactive in preventing Domestic and Family Violence.
5. Work with local service providers to reduce incidents of domestic and family violence.

Principles of police responses to domestic and family violence

To achieve the key roles above the NSW Police Force is guided by the following principles:

Domestic and family violence is a serious crime that impacts on the community at all levels and warrants a strong and effective justice response.

- Police will respond to victims and other affected family members in a constructive, consistent and non-judgemental manner.
- Police will use all the powers available to them to improve the protection of children living in homes where violence can occur.
- Police will work with local communities and external agencies to reduce and prevent domestic and family violence through monitoring the behaviour of offenders.
- The police response will take into account needs and experiences of people from diverse backgrounds, and work with these communities to reduce domestic and family violence (NSW Police Force Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) Forward Plan 2006-2009).
- Police will be mindful of the cultural differences among Aboriginal communities and will work with them to reduce family violence (Aboriginal Strategic Direction 2007-2011).
- Police will consider implementing the *Young Offenders Act* where the offender is a child (defined as person who is of or over the age of 10 years and under the age of 18 years – section 4, *Young Offenders Act*) and ensure the least restrictive sanction is used where appropriate.
- Ensure coordinated and integrated models of practice.
- Offenders of violence will be held accountable and challenged to take responsibility for their actions.

Child protection requirements when responding to domestic and family violence

It is not only adults who are affected by domestic violence. Historically the impact of domestic violence on children has not been sufficiently recognised. However there is now greater recognition about the impact on children of living with violence.

All police officers have a legal responsibility under S24 of the *Children and Young People (Care and Protection) Act 1998* to report children at **risk of significant harm** as outlined in section 23 of the *Children and Young People (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

Section 23 states the legislative requirements for police to report children at risk of **significant** harm, particularly when exposed to domestic and family violence:

S23 (d) the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm

Members of the community and mandatory reporters who suspect that a child or young person is at “**risk of significant harm**” (the statutory threshold) should report their concerns to the Community Services Helpline. This new statutory threshold has replaced ‘risk of harm’ in the legislation.

A child or young person is at **risk of significant harm** if the circumstances that are causing concern for the safety, welfare or wellbeing of the child or young person are present to a significant extent.

What is meant by ‘significant’ in the phrase ‘to a significant extent’ is that which is sufficiently serious to warrant a response by a statutory authority irrespective of a family’s consent.

What is **significant** is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child or young person’s safety, welfare or wellbeing.

In the case of an unborn child, what is significant is not minor or trivial and may reasonably be expected to produce a substantial and demonstrably adverse impact on the child after the child’s birth.

Significance can result from a single act or omission or an accumulation of these.

Domestic and family violence is a child protection issue

Children who live in homes where domestic and family violence occurs are at risk of harm and actual injury. Whether a child witnesses domestic and family violence, is in another room when an assault occurs, or attempts to intervene to protect their parent, the impact upon children exposed to violence in the home is considerable and should not be minimised.

When police attend a domestic and family violence incident and children are present, then the attending police officer(s) will use their professional judgement to make an assessment to determine whether the child or young person is at ‘risk of significant harm’ and requires an immediate report to the Community Services Helpline.

A child will only be reported to the Community Services Helpline if they meet the threshold for ‘significant harm’ (defined above). If the child present during the domestic violence incident does not meet the significant harm threshold, then the police officer will complete their COPS Event, including a Child at Risk incident report, back at the station.

How a police officer will know what meets the new threshold

Mandatory Reporter Guidance (MRG) has been developed to help frontline mandatory reporters such as police officers, doctors, teachers and social workers, determine whether the risk to a child or young person meets the new statutory threshold. The MRG is an interactive tool that police will access automatically through COPS when completing a Child at Risk incident report. The MRG forms part of the common assessment framework for all agencies working with children, young people and families.

When completing the COPS Event, the MRG tool will determine whether a referral to the Community Services Helpline or to the NSWPF Child Wellbeing Unit is required, and the system will make the appropriate electronic dissemination.

A police officer can still call the Community Services Helpline if they don't agree with the decision made by the MRG tool. This decision will be quality reviewed by a Supervisor.

If the information is disseminated to the NSWPF Child Wellbeing Unit, the Child Wellbeing Unit will assess the information and determine whether a referral is required to an external service provider, or if the information is maintained as local intelligence for future reference.

Child Wellbeing Unit

The Child Wellbeing Unit (CWU) will receive electronic reports from COPS and officers will review these reports and conduct a further analysis of information obtained from the reporting officer or other agencies, to determine what further action is required. Officers at the CWU will use the MRG tool to reassess the information they have to see whether the threshold for significant harm is met. If the threshold is met then a report will be made to the Community Services Helpline. If the threshold is not met then the CWU officers will either make a referral to a Family Referral Services to put families in touch with appropriate local services, or retain the information locally.

Family Referral Services

Family Referral Services are being established by NSW Health and will be run by non-government organisations to provide referrals to appropriate services in local areas for families who come to the attention of Child Wellbeing Units.

Police need to work closely with families, the community and other agencies to understand the complexity of domestic and family violence in relation to child protection. This would include using all the powers available to police to improve the protection of children living in homes where violence occurs.

Children on Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs)

Police are the only authority mandated to apply for AVOs on behalf of children and young people under section 48 (3) of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act*.

In March 2008 the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act* was amended to encourage the inclusion on AVOs of children involved in domestic and family violence incidents. The courts, or officers of the court, are required to place children considered in need of protection on an AVO, unless the defendant can justify the exclusion of the children from the order. An AVO is a civil matter and does not result in a criminal offence unless the AVO is breached by the defendant.

This means that when police attend a domestic and family violence incident involving children, and they take out an AVO to protect the victim, then the children of the person in need of protection will be included on the order and the conditions that apply to the person in need of protection, also apply to the children.

If a defendant **breaches an AVO** protecting a child or young person, then police will consider whether this breach places the child or young person at risk of significant harm in which case they will be required to make a report to the Community Services Helpline. A breach of an AVO is a criminal offence, and as such, may place the child or young person at greater risk of harm if the defendant has no respect for authority, or the safety and wellbeing of the victim or children.

Domestic and family violence can occur in all communities. Police recognise that children and young people who are victims of domestic and family violence are representative of a diversity of communities. Older children and young people have additional complexities to manage as they often have to negotiate being between two communities, and are often the public representatives of newly arrived and emerging communities.

Police have respect for the value of different community practices and beliefs on policing. Aboriginality, ethnicity, age, language, culture, religion, sexuality, education, abilities, socio-economic factors, area of residence, etc. all contribute to the formation of diverse families and communities that police work with.

Policing responses to all communities will be flexible, respectful and appropriate to the needs of the families with who police work.

Mandatory reporting

Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act*, officers of the NSW Police Force are **mandatory reporters**. A mandatory reporter is an individual required by law to report to Community Services when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child, or a class of children, is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person's work.

In the course of their duties police officers are required to immediately phone the Community Services Helpline (13 36 72) to report children who they believe meet the statutory threshold of risk of significant harm. All other reports regarding children at risk are completed electronically on COPS using the MRG tool and automatically disseminated to either the Community Services Helpline, where appropriate, or to the NSWPF Child Wellbeing Unit.

To find out more about the role of police in recognising and reporting children and young people at risk of harm, officers are referred to the following documents which should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- *Investigation and Management of Domestic and Family Violence Standing Operating Procedures*
- *Child Protection Standing Operating Procedures (currently being drafted)*
- *NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention 2010*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*
- *NSW Police Force Youth Policy*

Elder Abuse

Many older people in our community grew up in a world where abuse in the family home was rarely discussed and not widely recognised. Family matters were dealt with privately in the home, corporal punishment existed in schools and the expected role of men and particularly women were very different to that of today. As a result, elder abuse is an issue that many elderly people find difficult to discuss. Whilst it is impossible to know the full extent of elder abuse in our community, studies suggest it is far more common than previously thought.

What is elder abuse?

Abuse towards older people can occur in any of the following forms:

- Physical abuse – inflicting pain or injury, eg hitting or slapping, restraining, over medicating or refusing medication.
- Psychological abuse – causing fear or shame, intimidating, name calling, humiliation or making threats, including actions that cause fear of violence.
- Financial abuse – illegal or improper use of an older person's money or possessions.

- Neglect – the intentional or unintentional failure to provide necessities of life and care.
- Social abuse – preventing a person from having social contact with family members or friends.

Victims are usually dependent on the abuser in some way. Those who live on remote properties are isolated from their friends, neighbours, family; and those who have mental or physical disabilities are especially vulnerable to abuse.

The abuser is usually the abused person's carer or another family member or members, but it can also be a paid care worker, landlord or any other person in a position to do so.

The NSW Police Force recognises that every elder abuse incident will be different. The use of police powers under legislation (charging, AVOs and bail) may only be required in some circumstances, some instances may require less police and more social intervention. The NSW Police Force will endeavour to ensure every victim's right to live safely in their own home free of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Proactive approach

The NSW Police Force will use a proactive approach in dealing with offenders. This approach requires police to not only respond to incidents of domestic and family violence and give strongest consideration to arrest, but to develop strategies to reduce the negative behaviour of offenders who have had AVO applications consistently withdrawn.

The NSW Police Force is committed to using all lawful means to policing domestic and family violence. This includes wherever possible, removing offenders from the victim, taking out an AVO on behalf of victims and any children living or spending time with the victim (whether they are by consent or not), investigating breaches of AVOs, and developing solutions to managing repeat offenders.

When applying for an AVO exclusion conditions will need to be considered in situations where the violence is escalating and the threat of danger to the victim, and or children, presents an increasing risk of harm, and the victim is able to remain in their home.

This proactive approach should also apply to young offenders. This includes taking out an AVO against the young offender, however where exclusion conditions are necessary, duty of care towards the young offender must be taken, and all efforts must be taken to ensure that the young offender is accommodated appropriately.

The role of police in domestic violence has changed over the years. There is now a greater emphasis on police not only responding to incidents of domestic and family violence but working with the community to prevent an incident of violence or any further escalation. To this end NSW Police Force are committed to working with other service providers to improve practice and reduce incidents of domestic violence in the community.

To help achieve this, the NSW Police Force has identified specific roles and responsibilities within the organisation to coordinate its responses to domestic violence. These roles and responsibilities are both operational and corporate and aim to improve the strategic and local responses to domestic and family violence. They include:

The Corporate Spokesperson is a representative of the Commissioner who has responsibility for ensuring that the profile of police in managing domestic and family violence issues is corporately supported. The Corporate Spokesperson sponsors the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer program (DVLO program) and ensures DVLOs are provided with the necessary resources to effectively fulfil their role.

The Domestic and Family Violence Team – Policy & Programs, Field Operations provide strategic advice and support to the Corporate Spokesperson, the Executive, the Ministry, and the DVLO program in regards to policing domestic and family violence. Representatives of the team actively participate in a number of interagency committees, forums and training to develop integrated, coordinated responses to victims and offenders, and to assist police in driving down repeat incidents of domestic and family violence.

Region Domestic Violence Sponsors provide a critical link between operational responses and corporate issues in relation to domestic and family violence. They are selected Local Area Commanders and their role is to promote awareness and understanding of contemporary policing issues in the investigation and management of domestic and family violence.

Region Domestic Violence Coordinators provide a strategic role within the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) to assist the government to prevent violence against women, especially domestic and family violence. These positions have been established on a regional basis to contribute to the development of a more integrated, coordinated response by the government to domestic and family violence.

Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) are members of Crime Management Units within LACs and are part of the DVLO program. DVLOs are a critical link for police in investigating and supporting victims of domestic and family violence and working with key partner agencies to prevent and reduce incidents of violence. This position can have a major impact on the quality of the NSW Police Force response to domestic and family violence through their education with the public and police, community liaison with non government agencies, effective victim support, and assistance with court support.

Youth Liaison Officers (YLO) ensure that matters involving young offenders are dealt with under the *Young Offenders Act* where possible, and to consider the nature of family dynamics when delivering a police caution under the *Young Offenders Act*. The YLO should also not involve the victim as the support person for the young offender during the caution.

Specialist Youth Officers (SYO) have the responsibility to determine that a young offender involved in a domestic or family violence matter is dealt with under the *Young Offenders Act* where appropriate. The SYO has to make the determination bearing in mind that protecting the victim is paramount.

General Duties (GDs) Officers are often the first response officers to an incident of domestic and family violence, and play an important role in the investigation and management of these offences. They are given the opportunity to turn what could be a negative situation into a positive outcome by providing a professional and informative response to both the victim and offender. Any initial contact should never be undervalued in being able to set the scene for future police interaction with persons involved in domestic and family violence.

GDs receive the initial incident report and if required initiate AVOs and where necessary remove offenders from the home. Their role is critical in detailing the event and writing the narrative to explain the context of the initial incident. Their work not only has an impact on the victim, but also on the work of other people involved in the process. Investigating police should also consult both the SYO/YLO and DVLO when dealing with domestic and family violence involving young offenders.

Local Area Commanders have a responsibility to provide police officers within their Command with adequate training and support to ensure domestic and family violence incidents are dealt with promptly and efficiently, and that victims are treated with respect and dignity.

Crime Managers in Crime Management Units ensure a more strategic response is developed across all crime areas including domestic and family violence. The Crime Manager assists with strategic developments in relation to planning, intervening in crime and preventing crime at the local level.

Duty Officers have an essential role in the command, control and coordination of the LAC and they play a significant role in policing domestic and family violence. They are responsible for ensuring police attend domestic and family violence incidents and that they are appropriately resourced to provide an effective response.

Team Leaders/Shift Supervisors are in the position to provide immediate supervision, support and mentoring to police when responding to domestic and family violence incidents. They ensure timely attendance at incidents during their shift; monitor officer safety and quality review all domestic and family violence events.

Police Prosecutors provide the vital link between police and courts for many victims of domestic and family violence. Police prosecutors provide assistance, through consultation with the victims of domestic and family violence prior to attendance at court.

Operational Information Agency - AVO Unit provides a data entry facility for all AVOs in NSW. The AVO Unit also provides advice to operational police on the management of AVOs.

Education Services provides domestic and family violence training in recruit training as part of the Associate Degree in Policing. In addition further training is presented to all police through specialist domestic and family violence courses and workshops.

Interagency Partnerships

Across the state police work on a local level with a variety of key partners to provide effective legal and social services to victims of domestic and family violence. There are a number of interagency partnerships involving police that aim to deliver a coordinated response. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (DVCAP) which oversees 33 Women's Court Advocacy Services across 55 local courts
- The Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (DVICM) – operating at Campbelltown, Macquarie Fields and Wagga Wagga
- Staying Home Leaving Violence – operating at Bega, South East Sydney and Mt Druitt, with new programs to be implemented statewide over the next 4 years
- Police/Women's Refuge Partnerships Against Domestic Violence – operating in Manning/Great Lakes
- Domestic Violence Intervention Response Team (DVIRT) in Brisbane Waters
- Domestic Assault Response Team (DART) at Wyong, Tuggerah Lakes
- Green Valley Domestic Violence Service – operating in Green Valley

It is the responsibility of each LAC through their Crime Management Unit and DVLO to develop strong links with local agencies to provide an effective, coordinated local response to investigating and managing domestic and family violence.

Impact on police of working with domestic and family violence

Working in the domestic and family violence area is demanding and at times can be rewarding or demoralising. Often there are no obvious answers or quick resolutions to matters. It is not uncommon for police to respond to repeat victims and repeat offenders. Responses to incidents will often require different approaches due to the complex and often uncertain nature of domestic and family violence. The type and level of support given to officers will often have a bearing on the effectiveness of the outcome.

Domestic and family violence investigation requires thorough and comprehensive investigation. This is achieved through good supervision and ongoing monitoring of investigations. New police officers will be teamed with more experienced police when dealing with a domestic and family violence incident.

Education and training

Police need to be knowledgeable about their powers and responsibilities in relation to policing domestic and family violence. To achieve consistency and effective responses, specialist training of police in domestic and family violence is essential. However, not all police require the same degree of training as others. To this end police education and training will be structured in such a way that all police will have a minimum mandatory training requirement at entry into the organisation and then training will be targeted to fit the particular police roles in investigating and managing domestic and family violence.

Victim support

The impact of domestic and family violence on victims is of significant concern to both the NSW Police Force and the community. No one agency can provide an effective response to domestic and family violence. A multi service approach is needed to provide the most effective support to victims.

To prevent this serious crime and provide coordinated interagency responses to domestic and family violence, police officers and LACs will develop partnerships with key local agencies to provide effective victim support. In demonstrating the NSW Police Force's strong commitment to meeting the needs of victims of domestic and family violence, officers will:

- Where victims consent, refer them to support services. When a victim is required to attend court they will be referred to their local Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, where available, or other local court support provider.
- Ensure Local Area Commands develop strong links within their communities and work with them to identify strategies to further enhance the way in which police respond to domestic and family violence.

- Work with Aboriginal communities, with the assistance of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, to gain their support and trust, particularly women, to address broader family violence issues.
- Work with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, with the assistance of Ethnic Community Liaison Officers, to gain their support and trust, to develop appropriate responses to reduce domestic and family violence.

The Policy scope

All NSW Police Force employees are required to comply with the principles outlined in this Policy.

Authorisation

The Policy is authorised for distribution and implementation by the Commissioner of Police on 25 November 2008. The Policy has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Spokesperson for Domestic and Family Violence, the Domestic and Family Violence Steering Committee and key internal partners.

Policy implementation

The Policy framework, as outlined in this document, will be communicated to NSW Police Force staff including operational police officers, intelligence practitioners, Crime Managers, Crime Coordinators, Local Area Commanders, Specialist Operations Commanders, Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, Youth Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Liaison Officers, Gay & Lesbian Liaison Officers, Ethnic Community Liaison Officers, School Police Liaison Officers, the College for Police Education and the Crime Management Programs Unit.

The Policy will also be available to the general public through the NSW Police Force website.

Policy evaluation and review

The Policy will be reviewed over the next year to incorporate the Ombudsman's recommendations as they are implemented and pending legislative changes.

An evaluation and review of the Policy will be undertaken within 3 years following its implementation. This evaluation will focus on the process of policy implementation and aim to assess whether the Policy is meeting its stated objectives.

It is envisaged that this evaluation and review will be informed by feedback and field consultations. Additionally, the evaluation will be informed by a simultaneous review of the SOPs, and relevant training packages. The evaluation and review process will be coordinated and undertaken by the Senior Programs Officer, Domestic and Family Violence, in consultation with the Corporate Spokesperson.

This policy will be supported by the development of a Code of Practice for the Investigation and Management of Domestic and Family Violence, and the enhancement of the Domestic & Family Violence Knowledge Map on the police intranet.