

## Domestic Abuse Data Report – Oxfordshire

### **1. Context**

The interpretation of domestic abuse data held by the police is complex and subject to a number of caveats.

There is a difference between the domestic abuse crime rate and domestic abuse incidents (crime and non-crime – all occurrences).

The domestic abuse crime rate has been going up significantly for some years now, including a 50% increase in Thames Valley in 2017/18 and 20% in 2018/19.

Previous analysis has attributed the continuing rise in domestic abuse crime to a number of factors, including, but not limited to; increased victim confidence to report, increased public confidence that the police will respond, greater public awareness, additional requirements in relation to the recording of crime and better compliance with crime recording obligations.

Domestic Abuse incidents (crime and non-crime – all occurrences) include all matters reported to the police that are classified as 'domestic'. This category would, way by way of example, include a verbal argument between a couple which was reported to the police and where no crime has been identified.

### **2. The impact of the pandemic**

There was an initial fall in domestic abuse incidents across Thames Valley following the first national lockdown at the end of March 2020. It is believed that this was due to reduced opportunities for victims to report and a reduction in contact between partners and ex-partners under lockdown restrictions.

The data in Thames Valley and Oxfordshire shows that after the initial fall, numbers quickly rose again, with May 2020 seeing the second highest demand month on record for domestic abuse incidents across the force area in the last 3 years.

It may well be some time before the full impact of the pandemic on domestic abuse reporting is understood. The figures outlined below could be suggestive of victims continuing to be able to reach out to the police for help but there is likely to still be a cohort of individuals who have not reported matters due to well-known 'barriers' that a victim has to overcome when seeking support and help in an abusive relationship.

Analysis over the summer months indicated that victims were still reporting incidents at the time or close after. Further monitoring will be needed to see whether there is a subsequent increase in the reporting of non-recent incidents that a victim may have felt previously unable to report, influenced by lockdown restrictions.

The Thames Valley position in relation to domestic abuse data is broadly similar to that seen regionally and nationally, the latter indicating an 8% rise in domestic abuse incidents up to June 2020. Further national data is pending.

Context is also important in relation to reports made to the National Domestic Abuse Helpline. National media reporting has been suggestive of a significant percentage increase in calls and concern as to any disparity in this number with the number reported by police forces. Although data has been received from the Helpline, it does not yet show a year to date comparison. This data has been requested. Judgement of the pandemic impact (and the size of any gap or otherwise between calls to the Helpline and calls to the police) therefore remains difficult at this time.

In the early stages of the first lockdown, Thames Valley Police undertook pro-active checks on individuals who had been repeat domestic abuse callers prior to lockdown, but from whom we had no subsequently heard. Feedback from this exercise indicated that there was no substantive evidence of hidden harm being uncovered.

The safeguarding partnership in Oxfordshire, both statutory agencies and the third sector, completed considerable work post March 2020 to reach out to those who may be in need of help and support. This included extensive communications work across the partnership to target key areas where people may go and be able to ask for help, including chemists and supermarkets, as well as on-line messaging. There are numerous Apps now in circulation, which a victim can use as well as the Silent Solution to ask for help.

### 3. Domestic Abuse crime

The year to date (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020) increase for domestic abuse crime across Thames Valley is **17.83%**.

The year to date (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020) increase for domestic abuse crime across Oxfordshire is **27.5%**.

These figures should be read in conjunction with explanation as outlined in section 1.

### 4. Domestic Abuse crime and non-crime (all occurrences)

The year to date (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020-30<sup>th</sup> September 2020) increase for domestic abuse crime and non-crime (all occurrences) across Thames Valley is **5.3%**.

The year to date (1<sup>st</sup> April 2020-30<sup>th</sup> September 2020) increase for domestic abuse crime and non-crime (all occurrences) across Oxfordshire is **7%**. Further data comparison can be broken down as follows:

#### Oxfordshire

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Number change</b>	<b>% change</b>
April	920	1064	144	15.65%
May	996	1214	218	21.88%
June	1054	1098	44	4.17%
July	1151	1227	76	6.60%
August	1158	1218	60	5.18%
September	1001	901	-100	-9.99%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6280</b>	<b>6722</b>	<b>442</b>	<b>+7.03%</b>

### Cherwell and West Oxfordshire

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Number change</b>	<b>% change</b>
April	378	429	51	13.49%
May	409	466	57	13.93%
June	382	426	44	11.51%
July	427	483	56	13.11%
August	486	488	2	0.41%
September	418	370	-48	-11.48%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,500</b>	<b>2,662</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>6.48%</b>

### Oxford

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Number change</b>	<b>% change</b>
April	262	242	-20	-7.63%
May	270	288	18	6.66%
June	286	285	-1	-0.34%
July	289	321	32	11.07%
August	314	312	-2	-0.63%
September	258	232	-26	-10.07%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,679</b>	<b>1,680</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.05%</b>

### South and Vale

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Number change</b>	<b>% change</b>
April	280	393	113	40.35%
May	317	460	143	45.11%
June	386	387	1	0.25%
July	435	423	-12	-2.75%
August	358	418	60	16.75%
September	325	299	-26	-8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,101</b>	<b>2,380</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>+ 13.27 %</b>

## **5. Analysis**

The Oxfordshire position can be seen in a positive light in respect of numbers of reported occurrences have continued to increase despite the impact of and very real concerns about the pandemic. Caution should be applied however given everything known about the complexities of domestic abuse.

Further internal work has been completed on data in the South and Vale to understand why larger increases have been seen in that area and this will inform policing and partnership practice moving forwards.

September 2020 has seen a drop in domestic abuse occurrences across the board, which could be attributable to seasonal effects (there have previously been peaks in summer months).

Given the move into a second national lockdown from 5<sup>th</sup> November, it will be critical to ensure continued partnership working and communications strategies, as well as close monitoring of the domestic abuse data to enable fast-time reaction to any developing patterns and trends.

**Jon Capps**

**Detective Chief Inspector**

**2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020**