Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: Cardiff University
Unit of Assessment: Sociology (21)
Title of case study: Improving the police response to domestic violence and abuse in the UK and EU
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 – 2019
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Amanda Robinson	Professor of Criminology	01/03/2001 – present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 16/10/2015 – 31/12/2020
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Approximately 2 million people experience domestic violence and abuse in the UK each year. How police respond directly influences whether victims and perpetrators receive the appropriate level and type of intervention. Robinson's research provided evidence-based tools to break cycles of abuse through more effective frontline policing and partnership work with other agencies. Her work directly changed how police officers respond to both victims and perpetrators in the UK, and informed guidance for police in the UK and EU member states. Consequently, police have made additional investment, restructured units and developed bespoke policies and protocols to increase understanding of non-physical abuse and proactively identify high-risk victims and perpetrators.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Domestic violence and abuse is an increasingly large, and often hidden, problem across the UK. Robinson's research showed why and how the tools and approaches used by police and other practitioners, when responding to both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse, needed to change to become more effective **[3.1]**. For victims, this means establishing their risk of further victimisation and implementing safety plans to help keep them safe. For perpetrators, this means evaluating their risk of re-offending and implementing strategies to prevent or disrupt this from taking place.

2.1 Responding to victims

The key tool for victims is DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence), a risk identification checklist used to target resources to victims at greatest risk of further harm. Prior to this REF period, Robinson was on the advisory group that developed the tool, which was implemented across police forces in England and Wales in 2009. Since then, it has been used to identify approximately 100,000 high-risk victims each year (a small proportion of the total volume of cases where the tool is used) for enhanced risk management.

In 2014-16, Robinson was Principal Investigator for the first rigorous, independent evaluation **[G3.1]** of the tool, with funding (£87,949) from the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (a £2.5M investment by the ESRC and College of Policing, on which Robinson was Co-I). Robinson led on the design and implementation of this national research, was involved in all data collection and analysis, and led on writing the final report **[3.2]**. The research involved collection of official data, quantitative surveys of police officers, interviews with police and other practitioners, site visits and observations of police responding to domestic violence and abuse incidents. Key findings included:

- the tool could be improved by embedding an understanding of 'coercive and controlling behaviour' (criminalised from 2015) **[3.2]**;

- this reinforced Robinson's other cross-national research, carried out while she was on University Research Leave in the USA (2014-15), which found that police tend to focus on physical violence when responding to domestic violence and abuse **[3.3]**;

- consequently, non-physical abuse such as coercive control often goes 'under the radar' **[3.4]** of practitioners, even though it is a significant correlate of homicide.

Robinson's research produced convincing evidence for the need for a revised tool (e.g. with new questions and different response options) to help practitioners to identify, document and respond more effectively to victims of domestic violence and abuse.

2.2 Responding to perpetrators

The focus on developing and implementing effective interventions for victims of domestic violence and abuse has dominated the policy and practice agenda for nearly two decades. In contrast, there has been relatively less success in developing effective interventions for perpetrators. Robinson was Principal Investigator on six research projects totalling £68,958 **[G3.2-G3.7]** to improve the criminal justice response to domestic violence and abuse perpetrators.

International studies show that the majority of harm from crime can be attributed to a small proportion of perpetrators. Applying this to domestic violence and abuse, Robinson revealed that the most harmful cohort includes some combination of prolific, serial, and high-risk perpetrators **[3.5]**. She recommended that perpetrator-focused approaches to tackling domestic violence and abuse include information about serial, prolific and high-risk perpetrators. Robinson subsequently developed the Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT) in collaboration with criminal justice practitioners and policymakers. This tool is designed to be used by frontline practitioners (police, criminal justice, and third sector) to collate information on ten aspects of the offender and his/her offending behaviour. Once completed, it can assist practitioners to make evidence-based decisions as to which perpetrators should be the priority targets for multi-agency monitoring and management. Following national testing, the tool was implemented in 2016 as a central feature of three innovative perpetrator projects in Dyfed-Powys, Hampshire and Greater Manchester police force areas. Robinson's mixed methods evaluation involved site visits, interviews and analysis of quantitative data **[3.6]**. Key findings included:

- the use of the tool, supported by multi-agency collaborative arrangements facilitating access to a range of key information systems, enabled practitioners to systematically identify priority perpetrators;

- embedding a straightforward tool to structure practitioners' judgments was unanimously perceived to be a strength of the pilots;

- the tool enabled each site to 'pool intelligence' from multiple data sources. This led to identifying a number of priority perpetrators who were previously 'under the radar' of agencies due to limited, incomplete, outdated, or not shared information.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[3.1] Robinson, A. L., Myhill, A. & Wire, J. (2018). Practitioner (mis)understandings of coercive control in England and Wales. *Criminology & Criminal Justice, 18(1)*, 29-49. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1748895817728381

[3.2] Robinson, A. L., Myhill, A., Wire, J., Roberts, J. and Tilley, N. (2016). Risk-led policing of domestic abuse and the DASH risk model. London: College of Policing. PDF.

[3.3] Robinson, A. L., Pinchevsky, G. M., & Guthrie, J. (2018). A small constellation: Risk factors informing police perceptions of domestic abuse. *Policing & Society, 28(2)*, 189-204. http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10439463.2016.1151881

[3.4] Robinson, A. L., Pinchevsky, G. M., & Guthrie, J. (2016). Under the radar: Policing non-violent domestic abuse in the US and UK. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice, 40(3)*, 195-208.
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01924036.2015.1114001

[3.5] Robinson, A. L. (2017). Serial Domestic Abuse in Wales: An Exploratory Study into its Definition, Prevalence, Correlates, and Management. *Victims & Offenders, 12(5)*, 643-662. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2016.1187691

[3.6] Robinson, A. L. and Clancy, A. (2020). Systematically identifying and prioritising domestic abuse perpetrators for targeted intervention. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748895820914380

Selected grants:

[G3.1] (2013-16) *What Works Centre for Crime Reduction* (2013-16)*.* Funding: ESRC and College of Policing (£2.5M). Co-Investigator: AL Robinson. The What Works Centre provided funding (£87,949) for Robinson's study, *A multi-site process evaluation of risk-led policing and the DASH risk assessment tool in the UK*.
[G3.2] *Defining and Profiling Serial Domestic Abuse Perpetrators.* (2014) Funding: the Wales Probation Trust (£10,507).
[G3.3] *Development of the Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT) for Domestic Abuse.* (2015) Funding: Welsh Government (£5,366).
[G3.4] *Implementation Testing of the Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT) for Domestic Abuse*. (2015-16) Funding: National Offender Management Service (£10,427).
[G3.5] (2017) *New initiatives to tackle domestic violence perpetrators using the Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool* (PPIT). (2016-17) Funding: Crime & Security University Research Institute (£9,450).
[G3.6] *Tackling domestic abuse perpetrators using the PPIT in Dyfed-Powys police force area*. (2018-19) Funding: Dyfed Powys Police & Crime Commissioner (£22,172).
[G3.7] *Implementation of a new identification tool and multi-agency response for the most harmful domestic abuse perpetrators*. (2015-16) Funding: Cardiff University ESRC Impact Acceleration Grant (£11,036).

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Prior to Robinson's work, officers were failing to detect instances of non-physical abuse and their approach to perpetrators was largely reactive. Robinson provided the robust evidence base and practical tools needed to improve safeguarding of victims and identification of high-risk perpetrators.

4.1 Safeguarding victims

Robinson's research has, according to the College of Policing, *"led directly to revisions in how risk identification for domestic abuse is undertaken by frontline officers in England and Wales"* **[5.1]** and *"had a significant impact on the development of national policy and practice relating to risk assessment for domestic abuse"* **[5.2]**.

Robinson's 2016 review of the DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-Based Violence) risk tool **[3.2]** showed that it needed to be revised. Andy Myhill, the College of Policing's Evidence and Evaluation Advisor confirmed that *"based on the findings and implications of the DASH review research, the College decided to design and test a revised domestic abuse risk assessment (DARA) for frontline officers"* **[5.2]**. He noted Robinson's *"key role in the theoretical and practical development of the [revised tool]"* **[5.2]** which *"aims to assist frontline officers to better identify coercive controlling behaviour, a key factor in domestic homicides"* **[5.1]**. The College evaluated the revised assessment's impact on frontline policing in three police forces (Sussex, West Midlands and Humberside). The research found that in the Sussex pilot, victims disclosed nearly twice as much coercive controlling behaviour and officers in all three pilot areas had a greater tendency to record coercive control offences **[5.3]**. This showed that, in comparison to the earlier version, the revised risk tool was better at bringing subtle and often hidden forms of abuse into the spotlight of relevant agencies.

Because of the scale and significance of changing the main risk tool used in the UK and a significant number of EU member states, additional research on the revised tool was undertaken by the College of Policing. The College reviewed this work in October 2020 and concluded that the revised tool should *"be adopted by a greater number of volunteer forces, with the aim for it ultimately to be rolled out in England and Wales and become the standard for primary risk assessment for domestic abuse"* **[5.2]**. Despite delays due to Covid-19, the College has committed to a staged national roll-out of the revised tool, subject to ongoing testing, beginning in 2021 **[5.2]**. Robinson was appointed to the College's Risk Guidelines Committee in 2018 **[5.4]**, which has drawn upon her expertise and research to inform new

best practice risk guidelines for UK police to recognise and respond to people at risk. These were released on the College of Policing website for public consultation (September 2020) ahead of their expected publication in early 2021 **[5.4]**. The development of the revised tool alongside new national guidelines clearly indicates the importance of Robinson's research and expertise in driving forward evidence-based policing of domestic violence and abuse.

4.2 Identifying high-risk perpetrators

Robinson's Priority Perpetrator Identification Tool (PPIT) has been successfully implemented across three large police forces: Dyfed-Powys, Hampshire and Greater Manchester. Robinson worked with practitioners and policymakers (through an ESRC-IAA funded secondment, 2015-16) to support implementation, including planning work for pilots in 11 areas in England and Wales and developing free supporting materials and training resources for practitioners.

Ongoing implementation of PPIT began in the three forces in 2016 and has, to date, been used in nearly 2000 cases. Each site has invested resources (e.g. staff appointed or reallocated to support the pilots, bespoke IT platforms, etc.), restructured units (e.g. co-locating staff in the same space) and developed new policies and protocols (e.g. to specify within and between-agency roles and tasks) to support implementation **[5.5-5.8]**. The forces acknowledged how Robinson's tool and subsequent advice have demonstrably improved local policy and practice (e.g. holding perpetrators accountable, making victims safer, more efficient use of resources, better coordination between agencies). For example:

a. Dyfed-Powys

Prior to implementation, Dyfed-Powys Police had no specific framework for domestic violence and abuse perpetrators and an ad hoc approach limited to those perpetrators with an existing criminal record for domestic violence and abuse. In contrast, they found that Robinson's tool "*is useful for screening those before and after conviction, which the other tools cannot achieve*" *and "enables a broader focus on perpetrators active in the community"* **[5.5]**. They confirmed: *"The PPIT is highly beneficial for the force in identifying our most prolific, harmful and high-risk perpetrators of domestic violence, which has enabled us to more efficiently allocate resources. For example, we are now able to better focus limited resources on putting measures in place to manage the risk they pose through local policing assets…It has saved the force valuable time and money and has increased our overall efficiency in terms of how we deal with domestic abuse"* **[5.5]**.

b. Hampshire

To facilitate understanding of the PPIT, training was provided to more than 120 people from various agencies across Hampshire, including third sector charities, Hampshire Constabulary, Children's and Adult Services Departments, Housing Agencies, the National Probation Service, the MOD, and mental health services. This training was based on Robinson's input and research. To date, the pilot achieved the following **[5.6]**:

- established a county-wide Domestic Abuse Prevention Partnership (DAPP) involving police and other agencies using the PPIT;

- received 1250 referrals resulting in the use of the PPIT in more than 670 cases, enabling an evidence-based method to guide decision-making about which perpetrators require greater management to reduce their risk of further offending;

- collated information about priority perpetrators to inform a multi-agency approach to reduce their offending;

- increased efficiency as *"the PPIT is a simple and straightforward tool, which can be completed in a way that takes less time than other risk assessments"* **[5.6]**.

Hampshire's Serial/Priority Perpetrator Coordinator, a role created as part of the new county-wide partnership, uses the PPIT to identify priority perpetrators and support statutory agencies to manage their risk of further offences. She confirms that *"prior to using the PPIT, we had no research-based framework that enabled a shared multi-agency approach to tackling the most high-risk and harmful domestic violence perpetrators"* **[5.6]** and incorporating the PPIT

into working practices *"is invaluable for our partnership as it allows us to allocate resources efficiently, using an evidence-based method for differentiating those individuals who are capable of causing the most significant harm to victims and children in our communities"* **[5.6]**.

c. Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester Police launched its award-winning Reframe project in 2017 as a result of Robinson's advice and guidance on the PPIT **[5.8].** Created as a new way to reduce domestic violence and abuse in Oldham, Reframe identifies and manages men at risk of committing domestic violence and abuse while also working to support their victims. It uses the PPIT to assess the escalation of risk. This enabled police to *"intervene before serious incidents have occurred"* **[5.7]** and provides knowledge of offender behaviour assisting practitioners in making evidence-based decisions. Derek Rainford, Probation Case Manager, stated: *"One of the project's strengths has been our ability to make the intervention fit the individual, to tailor it to their specific areas of risk and need"* **[5.7]**. The pilot's success led to a funding extension and expansion into Rochdale, with the PPIT viewed as *"integral to this new method of joint working"* and recommendation that it *"be rolled out as a force wide identification tool"* **[5.8]**.

4.3 Improving the response to domestic violence and abuse in the EU

Robinson was the Expert Advisor to an EU-wide study on police risk assessment (2018-19) **[5.9]**. She advised the research team and was involved in drafting and revising guidelines and recommendations, which were published to police in all 28 member states in 2019. The guidelines acknowledge Robinson's contribution and make explicit reference to her work on victim risk assessment and perpetrator identification tools **[5.9]**. These guidelines, the first of their kind, offer a common approach for use by police officers across the EU in order to improve their responses to domestic violence and abuse victims and perpetrators. They have been widely disseminated in print and complemented with additional resources, such as a live webinar training session organised by the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL). Robinson was invited as a panellist for the webinar, which was accessed by 179 participants from agencies in more than 20 countries **[5.10]**.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[5.1] Letter: Nerys Thomas, Knowledge, Research and Practice Lead at the College of Policing

[5.2] Letter and email: Andy Myhill, Evidence and Evaluation Advisor at the College of Policing

[5.3] College of Policing evaluation report 'Piloting a new approach to domestic abuse frontline risk assessment'

[5.4] College of Policing delegate list for Risk Guidelines Committee and guidelines available for public consultation

[5.5] Letter: Ifan Charles, Detective Chief Inspector in Dyfed Powys Police.

[5.6] Letter: Carly Hickey, Serial/Priority Perpetrator Coordinator in Hampshire including Information sharing protocol for Hampshire (see page 6 for reference to PPIT).

[5.7] News article 'Domestic violence project expands'

[5.8] Letter: Chris French, Complex Safeguarding/Spotlight officer, Greater Manchester Police.

[5.9] European Institute for Gender Equality (2019) *A guide to risk assessment and risk management of intimate partner violence against women*.

[5.10] CEPOL invitation to Robinson as panellist and report on webinar participants.