

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND ABUSE HELPLINE: CALL DEMAND IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE DURING PERIOD OF CORONAVIRUS RESTRICTIONS 2020



REPORT FOR POLICE AND CRIME PANEL MARCH 2021

Introduction

1. Nottinghamshire's free 24 hour DSVa helpline is provided by Juno Women's Aid. It provides an access point to crisis services including refuge as well as information and safety planning and emotional and practical support for survivors. It also provides advice for the large numbers of professionals who call the helpline for advice. The helpline is funded by the PCC, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Juno Women's Aid also fundraises to support the helpline.
2. This paper updates the Panel on the current status of Nottinghamshire's 24 hour free Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Helpline.

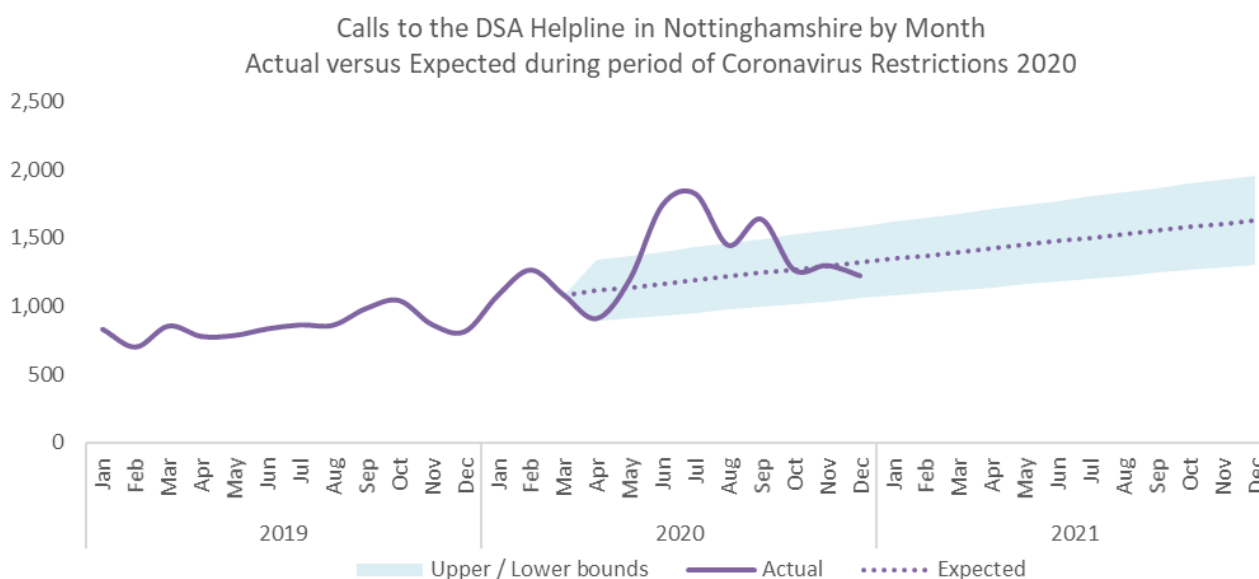
Demand

Volume of demand

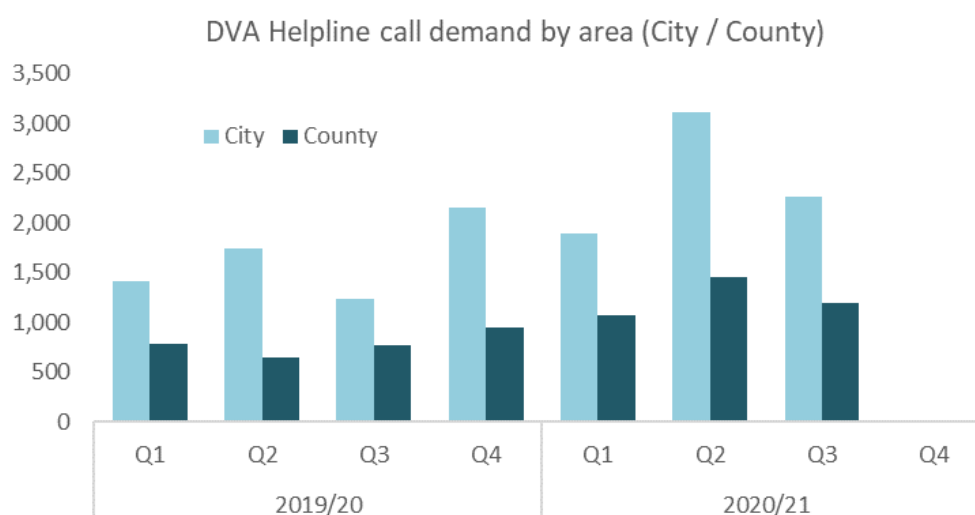
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 Forecast*
Total no of effective calls	10,370	9,936	9,053	11,223	13,619

* 2020/21 forecast based on April to December 2020 call volume

3. The helpline took 11,223 effective calls in 2019/20, which marked a 24% increase on levels recorded in the previous year. This is likely to have been driven, in part, by awareness raising activity undertaken, with call volumes reaching a level 23% higher than the seasonal norm in quarter 4 2019/20 - a period which largely predates the Coronavirus outbreak in the UK.



4. Calls made to the Nottinghamshire Domestic Violence and Abuse 24 hour Helpline fell to rate that was 18% below the level expected in April 2020 following the introduction of Coronavirus Restrictions on 23 March 2020. Call rates later rose to a level 50% to 53% higher than expected¹ in June and July 2020 as Coronavirus lockdown restrictions were eased.
5. Call volumes subsequently fell to a level in line with expectations during the October to December 2020 period. As a consequence of the sporadic increases in demand seen during 2020 and an underlying upward trend, the helpline is forecast to see an overall 21% increase in effective calls by the end of 2020/21 when compared to levels recorded in 2019/20
6. The city (+65.9%) and county (+69.6%) experienced similar increases in the volume of call demand during the April to December 2020 period when compared the same period in 2019/20. Call demand in the city remains around twice as high as levels in the county – largely due to the greater levels of awareness raising among professionals and survivors in the area. It is not currently possible to profile unique and repeat call demand by locality.



Total Calls to Helpline by quarter: City / County

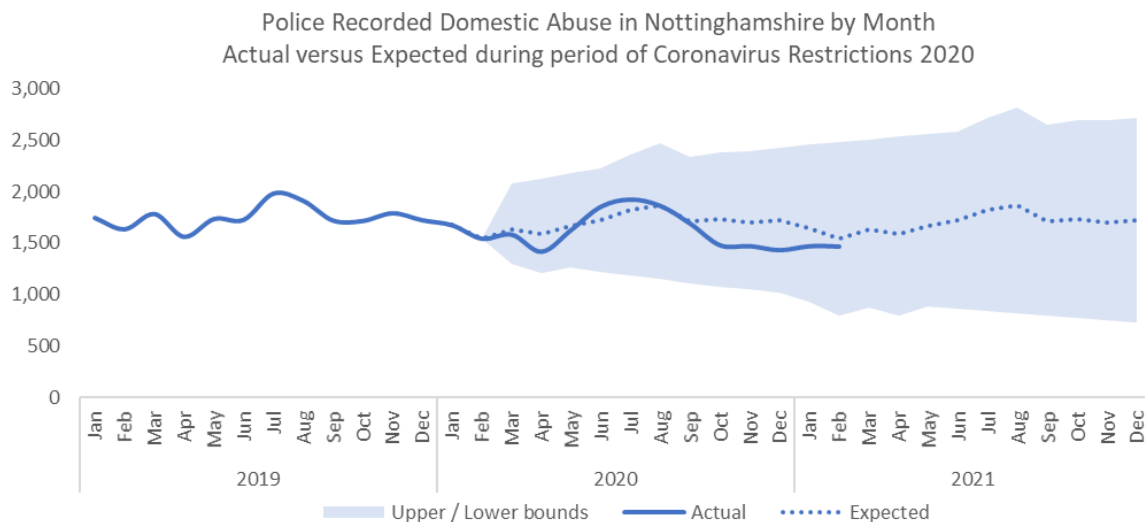
	2019/20				2020/21				% Change YTD*
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
City	1,412	1,748	1,237	2,151	1,896	3,114	2,271	n/a	+65.6%
County	779	644	774	955	1,079	1,453	1,453	n/a	+69.6%
Force	2,191	2,392	2,011	3,106	2,975	4,567	3,465	n/a	+66.9%

* Based on comparable year to date

¹ Expected call volume based on previous three year trend

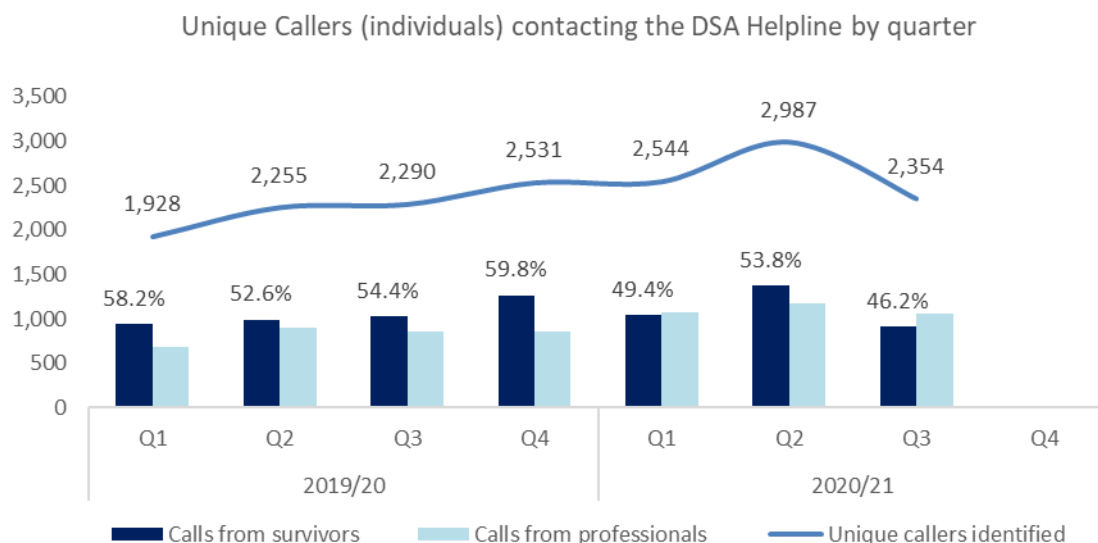
Reported crime

7. Domestic abuse offences recorded by Nottinghamshire Police also fell in April 2020 to a level 11% below expected as Coronavirus Restrictions came into effect. Recorded crimes later peaked in June and July 2020 – rising to a level 8% higher than expected as Coronavirus lockdown restrictions were eased. In contrast to the helpline, however, the period October to December 2020 saw police recorded domestic abuse offences fall to a levels 11% and 15% below the expected rate. This indicates potential for a further rise in reports to the police as subsequent lockdown restrictions are eased in 2021.



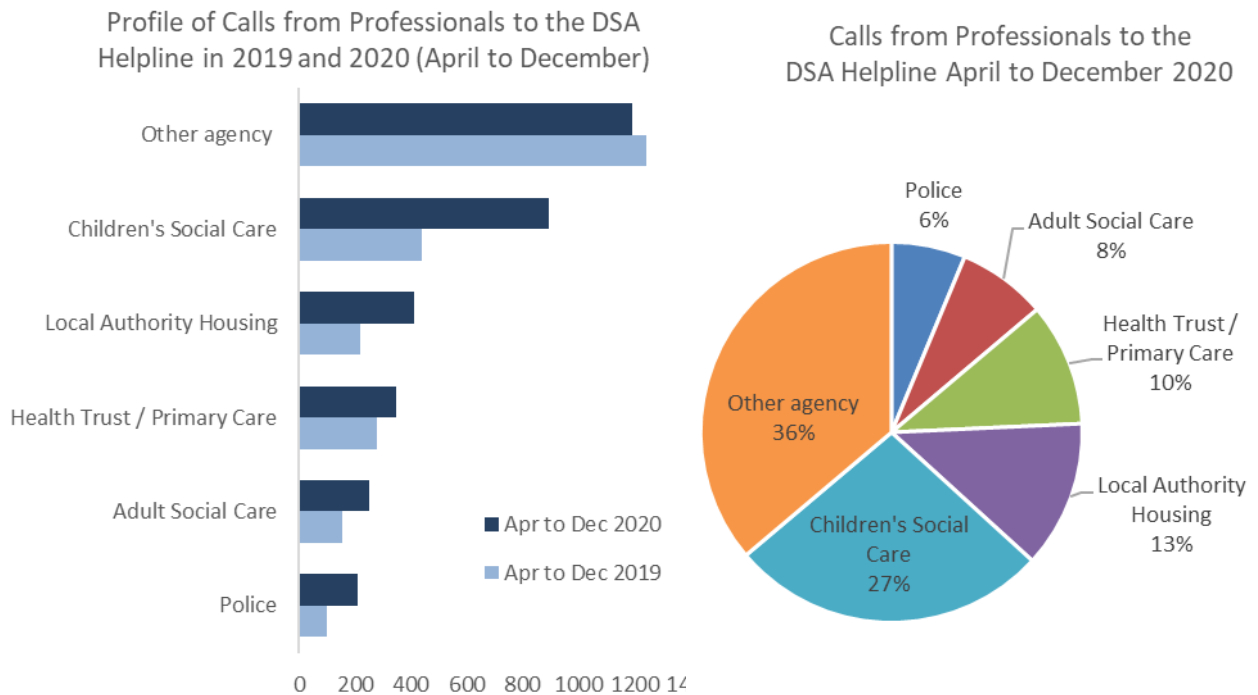
Individuals contacting the helpline (Unique callers)

8. The number of individuals contacting the Domestic Violence and Abuse helpline peaked during the July to September 2020 period (2,987) reaching a level 32% higher than Q2 of 2019/20. The March to December 2020 period saw a 12% increase in individual survivors contacting the helpline and a 36% increase in unique calls from professionals, compared to the same period in 2019/20. For the first time call demand from professionals (53.8%) notably exceed that of survivors (46.2%) in Q3 2020/21, largely due to an increase in the proportion of calls to the helpline that were from professionals in the city (57.6%).



Support for professionals

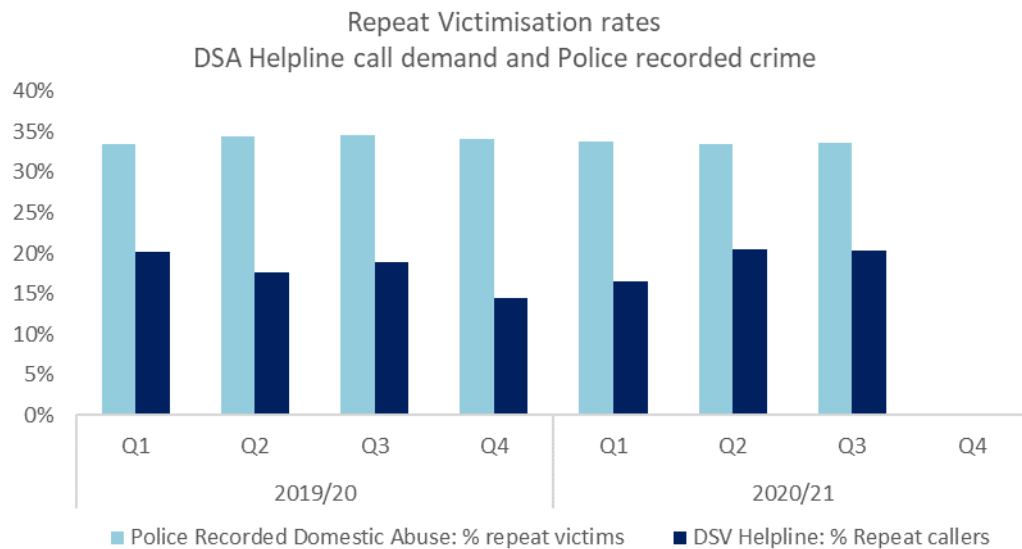
9. Calls from professionals working in Children's Social Care accounted more than a quarter (27%) of all unique calls from professionals received between April and December 2020, with the volume of calls received from this group having doubled (+99.7%) since April to September 2019. Similarly calls from police (+113%) and Local Authority Housing (+106%) professionals more than doubled during April to September 2020 when compared to the previous year.



10. Despite a marked increase in call volumes, the profile of support required has seen little change. The most common themes are housing and refuge searches, mental health help, emotional support and support options.
11. When the first lockdown began in March 2021 Juno asked professionals with non-urgent queries to contact the helpline via its email function, in order to keep the telephone lines free for survivors and urgent cases. Emails to the helpline subsequently increased significantly from around 224 in 2019/20 to 1,220 in 2020/21 (based on 1 March to 1 February periods). During the January – March 2021 lockdown, the service received an average 31 email contacts per week, compared an average of 5 per week pre-lockdown.

REPEAT DEMAND

12. Repeat callers accounted for 19.1% of unique callers contacting the DSA helpline between April and December 2020, which was marginally higher than the proportion recorded in 2019/20 (17.6%). The proportion of police recorded domestic abuse offences which involved repeat victims has remained stable over the last two years ranging from 33.4% to 34.5%.



SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

13. The PCC secured Ministry of Justice funding to support additional staffing hours to help meet helpline demand. Prolonged remote working supporting women in complex and distressing circumstances continues to put extra pressure on staff. Measures have been implemented to support staff further.
14. The PCC also secured Ministry of Justice funding to develop a live chat function for the helpline, as way of potentially easier access for survivors and reaching out to new survivors who may not otherwise access support.
15. Juno originally aimed to benefit from Women's Aid England's (WAE) learning from its national online chat service evaluation. However, the online platform being developed and launched by WAE and its digital partner was delayed until February 2021. In addition, the costs of the digital provision have now increased by almost 70%, with the costs of sustaining a dedicated live chat function for the Nottinghamshire helpline now being unaffordable. All helpline publicity will therefore highlight the helpline number plus the national Live Chat service as a way for survivor to access help.