

### The Victoria Police Family Violence Response Model (Rollout 2018-2020)

The Family Violence Response Model (FVRM), including the new evidence –based scored risk assessment tool FVR(L17), is our response to recommendations for Victoria Police from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, several Coronial inquiries and the 2017 Victorian Government Community Safety Statement. The FVRM significantly contributes to meeting the aims and actions described in Policing Harm, Upholding the Right: Victoria Police Strategy for Family Violence, Sexual Offences and Child Abuse 2018-2023.

It consists of:

- **Family violence investigation units (FVIUs)** providing a state-wide specialist response including dedicated intelligence officers and specialist trained investigators, guided by the Family Violence Investigation Model – Concept of Operations.
  - By January 2020, there will be approximately 415 trained specialist investigators working in family violence.
- **A thorough evidence-based family violence risk assessment and risk management tool.** The Family Violence Report (FVR) is recorded on a revised VP Form L17. The new risk assessment and risk management tool will be referred to as the FVR(L17).
  - Developed in conjunction with Swinburne University and Forensicare, the scored FVR(L17) is scientifically validated.
  - The FVR(L17) guides members' questioning of victims of family violence (including children) and perpetrators. It provides information for the ongoing investigation into family violence, as well as providing clear direction for police action on risk management. Interrogation of past LEAP history is automated to ensure members are aware of any previous family violence, lack of compliance with court orders and/or criminal history.
- **A police case prioritisation and response model (CPRM)** for family violence investigations and risk management. The CPRM will provide the FVIUs with a consistent process to identify cases where there is the highest risk of future and/or more severe family violence for FVIU investigation.
- **A mandatory force-wide multi-modal training program**, including on-line learning and face to face training, to ensure all police impacted by the introduction of the new FVR(L17) up to and including

the rank of Superintendent understand:

- the new model;
- how the FVR(L17) will be used;
- the importance and meaning of the family violence risk factors; and
- how to use the FVR(L17) to assess risks and keep victims of family violence safer.

These initiatives are all supported by education and training from the Centre for Family Violence at the Victoria Police Academy, including the new roles of permanent Divisional FV Training Officers (FVTO) at Senior Sergeant level.

### The Victoria Police FVR(L17) risk assessment and risk management tool

The new FVR(L17) includes;

- Evidence-based risk assessment and information capture in question format, including for and about children, so more risk information will be gathered, assessed and shared
- The MARAM indicators
- Scoring for identified high risk indicators (VP-SAFvR component)
- Five questions about children
- A number of direct questions that allow victims to choose to identify with communities of meaning to them for referrals and/or to identify a need for specialist assistance to participate in the police process e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, people with a disability, and/or as LGBTI
- Five automated questions that access historical records in LEAP.

Members will obtain information to answer all questions in the FVR(L17) so supervisors can sign off that the risk assessment has been conducted and the risk management plan is clear.

### The Victoria Police FVR(L17) and the Multi-Agency Risk assessment and Risk Management Framework (MARAM).

All sectors will operationalise the MARAM for their own use. The FVR(L17) operationalises the MARAM Framework for Victoria Police, and includes MARAM risk indicators.

The FVR(L17) contains an actuarial tool. Submissions to the Family Violence Royal Commission (FVRC) showed that past

reliance by police on their professional judgement without structured guidance for action, resulted in a standard of service that didn't adequately meet Victoria Police or community expectations. It also placed undue stress and pressure on police members' decision-making which can be critically scrutinised by the courts, the coroner and the community.

Effective primary and specialist response to incidents of family violence by Victoria Police is built on timely and accurate identification of risk. The RCFV increased our understanding that thorough risk assessment is essential to risk management and appropriate referral for continued victim support, child protection and offender management.

The FVR(L17) tool is question-based and includes an integrated rating of validated evidence-based risk indicators, other known risk factors including MARAM indicators, historical police matters, professional judgement and the victim's own assessment to determine risk. The risk assessment is the first step in determining the police response and the ongoing risk management that is required to prevent or reduce future family violence.

The tool is validated and evidence-based and was developed following evaluation of a two year trial in the Local Government Areas of Hobsons, Bay, Maribyrnong, Wyndham, Brimbank and Melton of a revised L17 known as the VP-SAFvR. Whilst informed by similar research and evidence about intimate partner violence as the MARAM, scored items on the FVR(L17) are drawn from a different data set than the MARAM.

The scoring was developed in response to, and to inform, police decision making and police investigations of reports of family violence including criminal investigations. It reflects how risk was assessed at the time of the report to police. It accurately predicts 'repeat family violence' (a future family violence report involving the same two people (or the respondent and a related child)), and 'severe repeat family violence' (three or more incident reports, or any incident that led to a charge for violence, that involved the same two people (or the respondent and a related child)).

The score guides police decisions about who will be responsible for the investigation and risk management strategies. Where severe family violence is identified, the scoring directs frontline members to the specialist police response with significantly improved investigative capacity and an increased focus on proactive management of perpetrators.

Appropriate criminal, civil and referrals options will be actioned as usual, but higher scores indicate frontline members should be implementing additional strategies to ensure the AFM's immediate and future safety.

- If a FVR(L17) scores 0-3, investigation primacy remains with the reporting member.
- Frontline members have the option to override a low score for FVIU review if they believe the score does not reflect the seriousness of the case. Frontline members cannot override a high score down.
- If a FVR(L17) scores 4+, it is automatically reviewed by the FVIU to identify cases with potentially elevated risk of future family violence, and more severe family violence, which should be considered for investigation primacy by the FVIU. Cases reviewed by the FVIU and determined to be of medium risk will be managed by the frontline with FVIU oversight.
- High risk and complex cases of family violence will be managed by the FVIU.

In the police FVRM response, 'high risk' refers to a high risk of future...

- family related physical harm and/or
- severe controlling behaviour and/or
- severe stalking behaviour.

The Specialist detectives' response, informed by dedicated intelligence, will be focused on investigation and collaboration on high risk cases. They will conduct a further investigation of risk in each case, and from that they will develop a proactive risk management plan for the respondent, the AFM(s) and the situation.

**Agencies will be able to see the frontline police score on the FVR(L17) but should be aware it has been designed for police risk assessment and risk management purposes.**

### Formal and informal referrals

The decision making about whether an informal or formal referral should be made is aligned to our overall risk assessment process in the FVR(L17). The scoring ensures decision making is no longer a subjective judgement made by frontline members.

'Formal Referral for AFM' and 'Formal Referral for Perpetrator' is automatically selected in the FVR(L17) in LEDRMk2 when the FVR(L17) score is 4+. Formal referrals will then be sent to referral agencies from the Portal based on the referral type requested by Victoria Police.

If the score is 3 or less members will have the discretion to either provide an informal referral or use an over-ride function and send a formal referral.

Informal referrals will be recorded and available to view in the L17 Portal, but not sent on to a service.

Every FVR(L17) is automatically sent to the L17 FV Portal, regardless of the score.

#### **Improved service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, LGBTI+ communities, people with disability, older people and youth.**

The FVR(L17) also includes a number of new direct questions, including the Standard Indigenous Question (SIQ), that allow victims to choose to identify with communities of meaning to them for referrals and/or to identify a need for specialist assistance to participate in the police process e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, people with a disability, and/or as LGBTI. Members must obtain information to be able to report on all questions in the FVR(L17).

Victoria Police has developed Practice Guides and training content for police about the needs of unique communities (and about intersectionality) in consultation with Priority Communities Division, and informed by learning from our engagement with communities.

During 2019 we will produce, publish and circulate a suite of public facing Fact Sheets about the police response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities, LGBTI+ communities, people with disability, older people and youth.

#### **Service agencies and the rollout of the Victoria Police FVR(L17).**

Victoria Police understand that the implementation of the new FVR(L17) will impact Victoria Police's government and non - government stakeholders in the family violence sector who administer or utilise the Family Violence L17 Portal to receive referrals.

Government stakeholders including funding bodies have been consulted and kept informed during the development process through current committees and have managed their own communications to their agencies about the upcoming changes.

Victoria Police has been working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services, Family Safety Victoria, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and Child First on the enhancements to the Family Violence L17 Portal which includes changes to screens and processes to accommodate the new FVR(L17), police updates and access to historical L17s.

Presentations and information about the changes will be provided between March and June 2019 directly by Victoria Police to;

- high level advisory and stakeholder groups
- service agencies, where possible through peak body member meetings
- other sector agencies through targeted emails and Reference Groups

Agencies will consider their own requirements for training, communications and IT changes to reflect the new FVR(L17).

#### **Review of the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence**

The Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (the Code) is currently under review. The review is in its early stages and Victoria Police look forward to consulting with the sector later in 2019.

In the meantime, the Code will undergo a minor interim amendment to keep it as up-to-date with current legislation/practice as possible.

It is noted in the Code that if any advice in the document conflicts with legislation, the Victoria Police Manual (VPM) or Chief Commissioner Instructions (CCI), then police are advised to comply with legislation, the VPM/CCI and then seek immediate advice from their supervisors.

#### **Contact for concerns about a case after the introduction of the FVR(L17)**

This process stays the same; Contact the FVLO (Family Violence Liaison Officer) located in every 24 hour police station.

#### **Projected dates for implementation**

- The FVR(L17) go live date for a controlled release will commence on 16 April 2019 to the following Local Government Areas:
  - Bass Coast, Baw Baw, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Latrobe, Maribyrnong, Melton, South Gippsland, Wyndham and Latrobe.
- Subject to an assessment of the controlled release, an organisation-wide release of the FVR(L17) is being prepared for 23 July 2019.

As part of a rolling stakeholder engagement and communications strategy, FVC will be increasingly engaging with the sector over the coming weeks and months in relation to the FVR(L17).

#### **Where can I find out more?**

Additional questions should be sent to [FVRM-MGR@police.vic.gov.au](mailto:FVRM-MGR@police.vic.gov.au)