



*“It’s like walking
blindfolded through
a minefield”*

Domestic abuse court advocacy provision in Scotland



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The *DACA* Accreditation Project

In 2022, **SafeLives** and **ASSIST** were funded by the **Scottish Government's Victim-Centred Approach Fund** to undertake the **Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy (DACA) Accreditation Project**.

SafeLives is the **UK-wide charity dedicated to ending domestic abuse, for everyone, for good**. SafeLives works with organisations across the UK to transform the response to domestic abuse. SafeLives adopts an approach that listens to survivors, putting their perspective at the centre of all work; uses robust evidence to make decisions; and learns from the expertise of people working frontline.

ASSIST is a specialist independent domestic abuse court advocacy and support service, focussed on **reducing risk and improving safety for those who experience domestic abuse**. With services for adults, children and young people, ASSIST was set up as part of Glasgow's Domestic Abuse Court in 2004. Since then, ASSIST has continued to expand and now provides a service in 13 local authorities across the west of Scotland. ASSIST support people of all genders whose partner, or ex-partner, has a domestic abuse case going through the criminal court. It is a free, telephone based, independent service.

SafeLives partnered with ASSIST for this project due to their expert knowledge and frontline expertise and understanding of the role of a specialist court advocacy provider.

Aims of the Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy Accreditation Project

The strategic aims of the DACA Accreditation Project are that:

- ➔ All individuals throughout Scotland have the opportunity to access accredited domestic abuse criminal court advocacy services when required;
- ➔ Clients feel safer, heard and more empowered in the criminal court process in Scotland;
- ➔ Professionals feel more confident in how to best support victims and survivors of domestic abuse to navigate a complex justice system;
- ➔ The effectiveness, validity, visibility and consistency of the domestic abuse court advocacy role is increased across Scotland.

To work towards meeting these strategic aims, over the course of the funding period the DACA Accreditation Project will:

- ➔ Create a 'map' of current domestic abuse court advocacy provision in Scotland;
- ➔ Create **national standards for domestic abuse court advocacy** in Scotland;
- ➔ Create an accreditation framework for domestic abuse court advocacy services;
- ➔ Create and deliver an SQA-accredited training unit on specialist domestic abuse court advocacy.

Key Findings

We found that in **1/3 of cases (8,977 of 30,139)** DACA is not available



DACA supported victims/survivors



Unsupported victims/survivors

Domestic abuse court advocacy services, throughout the duration of the court process, will

1. **Provide specialist domestic abuse support**
2. **Offer information about the criminal justice process**
3. **Act as a conduit for victims' voices to be heard in the criminal justice process**

Nearly a quarter (23%) of our survey respondents advised that domestic abuse court advocacy is not part of their job description, but something they will undertake when required

Local authorities with established DACA services

Local authorities without established DACA services

About this report

This report builds on the findings and analysis explored in depth in the **Mapping and Scoping Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy in Scotland – Definitions and Evidence Report** to underscore key findings around provision of domestic abuse court advocacy in Scotland. It highlights opportunities to better meet the needs of victims and survivors of domestic abuse across the country who have cases going through the criminal court process. **The Mapping and Scoping Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy in Scotland – Definitions and Evidence Report** acts as a partner report to this publication, giving a full outline of the research conducted to inform the findings.

We would like to thank all the practitioners, professionals and academics who have participated in the research. Most of all, we would like to thank the survivors who have shared with us their expertise and experiences. Without your insight, this report would not be possible.

Introduction

"You fight to keep your head above the water, all the time shouting and waving but still no one sees or hears you (...) DACA (Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy services) are like the lifeguard. They are there to help, support, provide guidance and keep you safe and prevent you from drowning"

Quote from Helen, a survivor and member of the SafeLives Authentic Voice Panel at the launch of the domestic abuse court advocacy standards

07.

In 2004, the first domestic abuse court advocacy service in Scotland, ASSIST, was created to work alongside the country's first Domestic Abuse Court in Glasgow. It was designed to provide advice, support, safety and information to victims and their children whilst there was an ongoing criminal court case proceeding through the Domestic Abuse Court and to bring services together to meet the needs of victims and survivors.⁽¹⁾

Since 2004, ASSIST has grown to provide domestic abuse court advocacy in 13 local authorities across the West of Scotland, and a number of other specialist domestic abuse court advocacy services have been established across the central belt, Scottish Borders, and Dundee.

Year one of the project was dedicated to undertaking a number of research tasks to underpin the project, including interviews and focus groups with people with lived experience of domestic abuse, desk-based review, stakeholder interviews, 20 professional workshops across Scotland which were attended by 245 professionals, and the completion of 242 surveys by professionals. More information about the research process can be found in the ***Mapping and Scoping Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy in Scotland – Definitions and Evidence Report***.

Through these tasks, the team found that the picture across Scotland is one that could be described as a “postcode lottery”; in some areas victims of domestic abuse have a pathway to specialist domestic abuse and court advocacy in a single service, whilst victims in other areas are left with a piecemeal provision of varying levels of support and information from professionals who are often working outside their roles to fill the gap.

(1) *Advice, Support, Safety & Information Services Together (ASSIST): The Benefits of Providing Assistance to Victims of Domestic Abuse in Glasgow: <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/107169/1/ASSIST%20Final%20Evaluation%20Report.pdf,%20p%2023>*

Section 1: Defining domestic abuse court advocacy



At the outset of the project, it became apparent that there was not a clear definition of domestic abuse court advocacy. A clear definition is necessary because it:

- Supports victims to understand what service they will receive, and the length of service;
- Supports the development of consistent good quality advocacy support throughout the country;
- Increases the validity of the role with other agencies as there is a shared understanding of the service.

Through our research tasks, described in more detail in our ***Mapping and Scoping Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy in Scotland – Definitions and Evidence Report***, the project team has cemented a definition of domestic abuse court advocacy for Scotland.

Domestic abuse court advocacy services will, throughout the duration of the court process:

- Provide specialist domestic abuse support;
- Offer information about the criminal justice process;
- Act as a conduit for victims' voices to be heard in the criminal justice process.

Provision of specialist domestic abuse support

Specialist domestic abuse support requires an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse, an individualised approach to assessing risk and planning for safety, and a knowledge of the options available to victim/survivors.

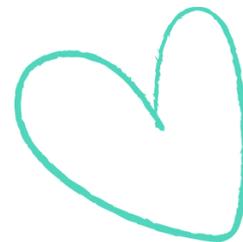
Provision of information about the criminal justice process

Court advocacy requires services to have knowledge and understanding of criminal court procedures and links with criminal justice agencies to create space for the voice of victims and survivors.

Act as a conduit for victims' voices to be heard in the criminal justice process

During interviews, several victims describe being treated as a “*piece of evidence*” rather than a person during the court process. The accused has access to representation from a defence agent throughout the process, who will share the accused’s thoughts within decision-making processes, for example, in determining bail conditions or a non-harassment order. Without court advocacy the victim’s views may be determined through information from Police or Victim Information and Advice. However, these agencies are not a specialist domestic abuse services, considering the totality of a victims’ risk and safety dynamically throughout the duration of the court process.

Support throughout the criminal justice process



The need for consistent, client-centred support underpins effective domestic abuse and criminal court advocacy.

In all 20 workshops the project team undertook, participants highlighted the need for a consistent point of contact throughout the process. As one survey respondent highlighted, it is important for services to:

“seek their views, have (a) consistent point of contact, keep (them) informed. This is often not done or far too late”

Survey Respondent, Specialist Domestic Abuse Service

Research with victims and survivors has further demonstrated the necessity of support throughout the criminal justice process.

Emma Forbes’ Glass Walls project highlights gaps and duplication in support when multiple agencies are in contact at procedurally significant points, such as giving evidence in court, whilst there can be long gaps where victims/survivors are left to manage the situation on their own. Forbes describes police and court responses as official ‘*punctuation marks*’ for policy-makers and academics ⁽²⁾, and there is evidence that this is true of many agencies with criminal justice functions, which rely on engagement with the victim/survivor primarily to fulfil their roles within the system, rather than to provide the support required or requested by the victim/survivor.

(2) Forbes, E. (2022) *Victim's experiences of the criminal justice response to domestic abuse. Beyond Glass Walls. Emerald Publishing. Synopsis available as a download here: <https://glasswallsart.com/resources/>*

“Victims and witnesses identified significant support needs during this period (pre-court and preparation for court), relating to both their interdependent emotional wellbeing and advocacy needs. Individuals with access to a specialist advocacy and support worker, noted the value of practical and informational support, and of these workers providing a conduit between the courts COPFS and victims and witnesses.” (3)

Domestic abuse court advocacy centres the needs of the victim/survivor rather than the needs or restrictions of the agency, to do this requires the provision of support throughout the court process.



(3) Houghton, C. et al. (2022) 'Domestic Abuse Court Experiences Research: the perspectives of victims and witnesses in Scotland', p48

Core Tasks



To develop a standardised understanding of the role in practice, the project team focused on the core tasks as identified by key stakeholders, evidence from academic research and service evaluations, and the project team's knowledge of tasks routinely delivered by existing services.

The result was a list of tasks, which the DACA Accreditation Project considers the core tasks of a domestic abuse court advocacy service. *These tasks should be carried out throughout the court process for each client.*

Providing information to the client should always include:

- Explaining the overall criminal justice system;
- Explaining the overall court process;
- Contacting clients before and after every court hearing, including providing court dates and outcome information.

Creating space for the client's voice to be heard in the criminal justice process and ensuring this is actioned through:

- Providing court reports to the procurator fiscal (PF);
- Liaising between the client and court regarding conditions of bail;
- Providing information regarding the client's views on non-harassment orders to the court.

Increasing the client's safety throughout the court process and beyond is achieved by:

- Dynamic risk assessment with the client;
- Safety planning, including regular reviews with the client;
- Contacting Victim Information and Advice (VIA) regarding arrangements/support for clients to attend court as witnesses;
- Undertaking an 'end of support' conversation.

DACA workers will offer a level of emotional support by:

- Being domestic abuse competent and trauma responsive throughout court proceedings.

These are the **minimum tasks** that a service is expected to complete; however, DACA services and workers often go above and beyond these core tasks.

Section 2: Where is domestic abuse court support currently available?

Domestic abuse court advocacy, as per the definition above, is available in 19 local authorities, largely focused on the south of Scotland.

Figure 1: Local authority areas with established domestic abuse court advocacy services

Source: DACA professional workshop survey

Created using: Flourish using Office for National Statistics (Boundaries), Simple maps (Points)

Argyll and Bute
City of Edinburgh
Dumfries and Galloway
Dundee City
East Ayrshire
East Dunbartonshire
East Lothian
East Renfrewshire
Glasgow City
Inverclyde
Midlothian
North Ayrshire
North Lanarkshire
Renfrewshire
Scottish Borders
South Ayrshire
South Lanarkshire
West Dunbartonshire
West Lothian



Which services currently offer domestic abuse court advocacy?

Formal domestic abuse court advocacy, defined as specialist domestic abuse services offering all the core tasks throughout a victim/survivor's journey through the justice system, was provided by ASSIST, Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support, Domestic and Sexual Assault Team, Dundee ASSIST and Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Court Support. Further information about the services and where they operate is found in **Table 1**.



Table 1: Domestic abuse court advocacy services



Service	Area(s) service operates in	Description
<p>ASSIST Advocacy Support Safety Information Services Together</p>	<p>Argyll and Bute East Ayrshire North Ayrshire South Ayrshire Dumfries & Galloway Glasgow East Dunbartonshire West Dunbartonshire Inverclyde North Lanarkshire South Lanarkshire Renfrewshire East Renfrewshire</p> <p>Also provides a service to male clients with cases calling at Edinburgh Sheriff Court</p>	<p>ASSIST operates within Glasgow City Council and is co-located with Police Scotland</p>
<p>Domestic Abuse Advocacy Support (DAAS)</p>	<p>Scottish Borders</p>	<p>Located within Scottish Borders Council</p>



Continued...



Service	Area(s) service operates in	Description
Domestic and Sexual Assault Team (DASAT)	West Lothian	Located within West Lothian Council, co-located with justice services within the Civic Centre
Dundee ASSIST	Dundee	Partnership between Dundee Women’s Aid and Barnardo’s, co-located with Police Scotland
EDDACS Edinburgh Domestic Abuse Court Support	EDDACS can support female victims where the case is being heard at Edinburgh Sheriff Court, independent of the local authority they live in (usually clients living in Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian)	Located within Edinburgh Women’s Aid



There is no singular path for how established services have developed. Services are operating in urban and rural environments, operate from local authority and third sector contexts, and may be co-located within justice, local authority or domestic abuse services.

Section 3: What support is in place where there is not an established domestic abuse court advocacy service?



In the year 2022-23, a total of 30,139 charges with a domestic abuse identified proceeded to court. 8,977 of these cases, a little under a third (30%), were in areas which do not have established domestic abuse court advocacy services⁽⁴⁾. In these areas, we found a complex picture of services providing varying levels of advocacy at various stages of the court process.

We found that nearly a quarter (23%) of survey respondents advised that *domestic abuse court advocacy is not part of their job description*, but they undertake this when required. This could be indicative of professionals attempting to respond to the unmet needs of victims and survivors, and may demonstrate strong relationships with clients, and a willingness to holistically respond to the needs of a victim/survivors. However, this can be problematic as this practice can be hidden, inconsistent or not available to all victims requiring domestic abuse court advocacy. This also places pressures on already very stretched services, who may not have established ways of working with Criminal Justice partners, meaning they are spending time trying to access and share information and attempting to navigate the complexities of the criminal justice system.

(4) <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/domestic-abuse-and-stalking-charges-in-scotland-2022-2023/html/>

Below we have discussed a number of agencies currently offering a level of advocacy, and why these are not currently meeting the definition of domestic abuse court advocacy services. **Section 4** will offer some ways services can be developed into domestic abuse court advocacy.

Frontline specialist domestic abuse services

As specialist domestic abuse services offer their support throughout a victim or survivor's experience of domestic abuse, regardless of whether there are criminal court proceedings, these services already offer specialist domestic abuse support throughout the duration of the court case. However, the services may not have formal processes for criminal court advocacy and/or specialist knowledge of criminal justice procedures and processes.

Frontline specialist sexual abuse services

Since 2016, Rape Crisis have been providing a national advocacy service to support survivors of sexual abuse navigate the criminal justice system in Scotland. Rape Crisis can provide formal court advocacy support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse only when the case progressing through criminal court involves sexual abuse charges.

Support and information for those affected by crime

Services offering support and information for those affected by crime offer valuable support in engaging with the criminal justice system, but we have not categorised these services as domestic abuse court advocacy because they do not presently offer specialist domestic abuse support.

Caledonian and Justice Social Workers

“Often women whose partners are being assessed for the Caledonian have never been given any information from (court or advocacy service) so we are starting from the beginning with them.”

Survey Respondent, Caledonian and Justice Social Work

The Caledonian system is a criminal justice intervention for men who have been convicted of domestic abuse; in addition to work with the offender, the system also offers support to the (former) partner and any children. The partner workers offer specialist domestic abuse support; however, the Caledonian programme and other Justice Social Work interventions will only be considered following a guilty plea/verdict, therefore, the victim/survivor will only receive this support at the end of that court process.

The high number of workers who indicate that they are completing informal court advocacy suggests that they are filling this gap either in the short space of time before final sentencing when Criminal Justice Social Work Reports are being completed, and/or that Caledonian and Justice Social Workers are supporting with subsequent domestic abuse offences that come to the attention of the court whilst an order is still in place.

Caledonian and Justice Social Workers therefore do not have the scope or remit to be available to victims/survivors of domestic abuse throughout the process. Additionally, as the Caledonian system is designed to work with male perpetrators only, this leaves a gap for victims of female perpetrators.

Police Scotland

Due to the scope and remit of the role of their role, police officers are more likely to be available to victims and survivors of domestic abuse in the initial stages of their criminal justice journeys. In some cases, a specialist officer may be in contact with victims/survivors throughout the criminal court process, but officers are limited in their ability to provide timely court updates following court hearings. Police Scotland aim to update victims and survivors on the outcome of investigations, but they do not have the resources to provide updates on court cases throughout criminal court proceedings.

The role of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

Where there is no formal or informal court advocacy service available, victims and survivors are reliant on communication with Victim Information and Advice (VIA) ⁽⁵⁾, the service offered by the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service for vulnerable victims. VIA officers are working across a variety of crime types and may not have received any specialist training in domestic abuse, as discussed in the recent report *'The prosecution of domestic abuse cases at sheriff summary level'* by HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland ⁽⁶⁾ which found that *"few VIA officers we interviewed said they had experienced any domestic abuse training which is concerning given that domestic abuse cases make up a substantial proportion of their workload"*. ⁽⁷⁾

⁽⁵⁾ <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/domestic-abuse-and-stalking-charges-in-scotland-2022-2023/html/>

⁽⁶⁾ <https://www.prosecutioninspectorate.scot/media/h30hqpbpr/the-prosecution-of-domestic-abuse-cases-at-sheriff-summary-level.pdf>

⁽⁷⁾ <https://www.prosecutioninspectorate.scot/media/h30hqpbpr/the-prosecution-of-domestic-abuse-cases-at-sheriff-summary-level.pdf>, p26-27

Section 4: Scope to develop existing services into domestic abuse court advocacy services



As described in **Section 3** there are a number of services providing some level of court advocacy. There are several ways in which they could be developed to be considered domestic abuse court advocacy services.

Creating specialist domestic abuse court advocacy teams

Services which are currently offering information about the criminal justice process, such as Victim Support Scotland, would need to further develop their knowledge and skills in relation to domestic abuse in order to effectively and safely support people who are currently experiencing, or have previously experienced, domestic abuse.

For some services, there may be scope to create specialist domestic abuse court advocacy teams.

Developing criminal court advocacy

Where services are offering specialist domestic abuse support throughout the duration of a court case, for example, in frontline specialist domestic abuse services, developing formalised criminal court advocacy, encompassing all the core tasks, is an option. Domestic abuse services further benefit from being independent from the criminal justice system. As such, it is likely that specialist domestic abuse services are best placed to provide domestic abuse court advocacy.

An additional consideration would be the need to provide services for victims and survivors who are not women. Local Women's Aid groups exist in every local authority in Scotland, but service provision for non-female survivors is patchy. One way to address this would be developing partnerships between Women's Aid groups and other organisations to provide a fulsome offer for all victims and survivors in each area.

Developing a new service

Where services are offering specialist domestic abuse support and criminal court advocacy but are unable to offer this throughout the court process, consideration could be had to exploring the development of new services. For example, Caledonian and Justice Social Workers are limited in only being able to offer a service after Justice Social Work reports have been requested. A new service that expands this support to be available throughout the court process could become a domestic abuse court advocacy service.

Partnership options

Another option that could be explored is creating partnerships. This model was used in the development of Dundee ASSIST and could offer ways for services to share resources to meet demands, including the option of services offering specialist support to minoritised communities partnering with services with broader referral scope.

Practical Considerations

Current barriers to the development of new domestic abuse services include resourcing. At present, there is no ring-fenced funding available to develop new domestic abuse court advocacy services. Services also need to recruit and train specialist staff able to navigate both the domestic abuse support and criminal court advocacy elements of the role.

Funding challenges vary for statutory and non-statutory agencies, but at present there is no dedicated funding available for the development of new domestic abuse court advocacy services. The Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence against Women and Girls Services⁽⁸⁾ states, domestic abuse services are already spending *significant amounts of time in sourcing and applying for mosaic funding from different statutory and non-statutory funders*.

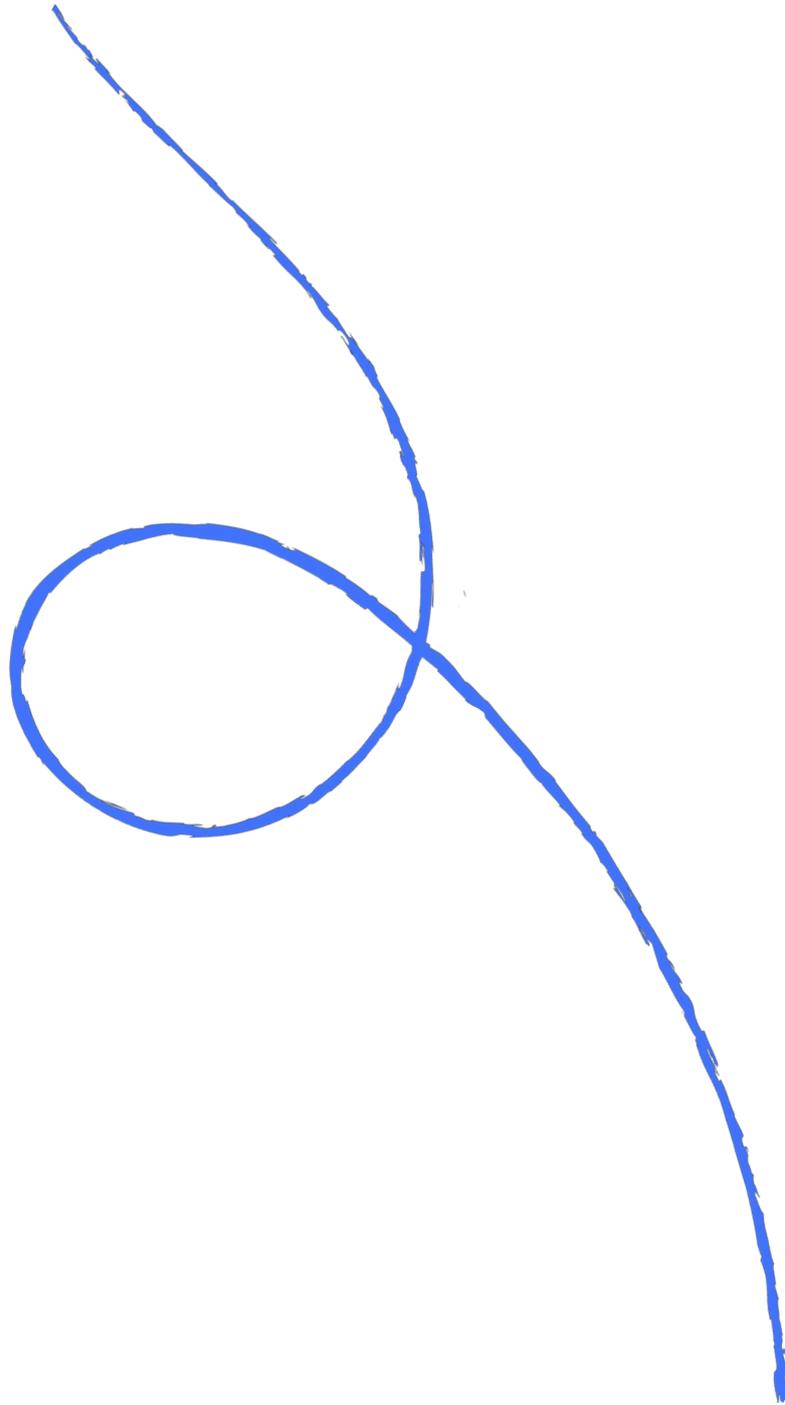
The scale of the issue is also significant. Domestic abuse court advocacy services need to be able to provide support to all victims and survivors of domestic abuse going through the criminal court process. **Table 2** demonstrates how many domestic abuse charges proceeded to court in 2022-23 in areas where there is no domestic abuse court advocacy service.



(8) <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2023/06/violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/documents/independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-violence-against-women-girls-services/independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-violence-against-women-girls-services/govscot%3Adocument/independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-violence-against-women-girls-services.pdf>

Table 2: Number of charges for each Procurator Fiscal Office situated in an area which does not have domestic abuse court advocacy, 2022-23 ⁽⁹⁾

Procurator Fiscal Offices	Charges in 2022-23 ⁽¹⁰⁾
Aberdeen	1,580
Kirkcaldy	1,318
Dunfermline	1,012
Falkirk	945
Perth	725
Inverness	683
Forfar	573
Elgin	457
Stirling	386
Peterhead	358
Alloa	301
Tain	164
Wick	105
Banff	89
Stornoway	77
Kirkwall	67
Fort William	61
Lerwick	41
Portree	35
Total	8977



(9) <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/ajalqokj/domestic-abuse-publication-2022-23-final-1.pdf>

(10) These figures represent the statistics at the time research was conducted. Figures for 2023-24 are available here: <https://www.copfs.gov.uk/publications/domestic-abuse-and-stalking-charges-in-scotland-2023-2024/html/>

Conclusions

“Victims highlighted the importance of advocacy workers and many thought they were critical in helping them navigate and understand the justice process. One victim described their support organisation as being, ‘like scaffolding, holding me up’. One victim said they would have disengaged from the justice process had it not been for the advocacy worker. Another was worried about what happened to those victims without this kind of support.”⁽¹⁾

The title of this report **“It's like walking through a minefield blindfolded”**, is a quote from a survivor with experience of the criminal justice system. Domestic abuse court advocacy services are vital in helping victims and survivors navigate not only the complexities of the criminal justice system, but also the totality of the risks they face. Risk can escalate around court dates and criminal justice intervention, leaving victims and survivors vulnerable to further abuse and offences.

Victims in nearly a third of charges in Scotland live in areas where there is no established domestic abuse court advocacy service. Whilst they may be lucky enough to be supported by a patchwork provision of advocacy from a variety of sources, victims and survivors are not engaging with the justice process due to a fear of having to navigate these complex processes alone.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.prosecutioninspectorate.scot/media/h30hqpbpr/the-prosecution-of-domestic-abuse-cases-at-sheriff-summary-level.pdf>, p93

"I chose not to report very serious offences because I didn't understand the systems or have someone to walk with me through it. I was isolated by the abuse and I didn't have family in this country at all, or anyone who knew the system."

V, Survivor and Authentic Voice Panel member

This postcode lottery impacts on victims, services, communities, and wider society. Equally Safe ⁽¹²⁾, Scotland's Strategy for Preventing and Eradicating Violence Against Women and Girls, commits to prioritising a number of actions, including actions which will:

- ➔ Support early intervention;
- ➔ Build political, institutional, sectoral, organisational, community, and personal commitment and contribution to preventing and tackling VAWG;
- ➔ Hold perpetrators of VAWG to account;
- ➔ Deliver sustainable, informed and safe specialist and universal service responses for victim/survivors that are holistic and meet victim/survivors' individual needs.

(12) <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2023/12/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/documents/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/govscot%3Adocument/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls/equally-safe-scotlands-strategy-preventing-eradicating-violence-against-women-girls.pdf>

Good quality domestic abuse court advocacy services offer reassurance to victims and survivors who are considering reporting domestic abuse offences to the police, thus supporting tertiary prevention efforts. Embedding domestic abuse court advocacy as a key partner in the criminal justice system supports individual victims, and the broader understanding of domestic abuse by the variety of professionals domestic abuse court advocacy workers engage with.



"Everyone working within the criminal justice system is doing their best. They're looking at facts and information through the lens of their role. The advocate is centred on the victim's interest and that puts them in a unique position to make sure that the impact of offending, safety fears, risk identifiers and the needs of that victim are brought into the process." ⁽¹³⁾

⁽¹³⁾ Emma Forbes, speaking at the launch of the Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy Standards. Recording available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D5MZBbGdqCQ&t=2173s>

The **Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy (DACA) Accreditation Project** is able to support both established and emerging domestic abuse court advocacy services, but sustainable change requires significant investment of resources and in training to address the needs of victims across Scotland. Funding support is outside the remit of the DACA Accreditation project but has been recently reviewed in the Scottish Government’s Independent Strategic Review of Funding and Commissioning of Violence Against Women and Girls Service. The report recommends that the responsibility for future funding models, including court advocacy, lies with the Scottish Government, recognising court advocacy as a ‘minimum core service’, and concluding that future funding for such core services “*should be agreed for at least an initial three year period, with the option of two further years thereafter*” ⁽¹⁴⁾. To develop clear pathways for good quality domestic abuse court advocacy across Scotland, we support this call.



(14) <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/independent-report/2023/06/violence-against-women-girls-independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-services-report/documents/independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-violence-against-women-girls-services/independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-violence-against-women-girls-services/govscot%3Adocument/independent-strategic-review-funding-commissioning-violence-against-women-girls-services.pdf>, p83

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Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service

webpage '**Victim Information and Advice (VIA) service**' available here:

www.copfs.gov.uk/services/victim-services/victim-information-and-advice-via-service/

Domestic Abuse Court Advocacy Accreditation Project

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