| Police Scotland logo | Freedom of Information Response Our reference: FOI 25-0427  Responded to: 26 February 2025 |
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Your recent request for information is replicated below, together with our response.

Tackling domestic abuse is a priority for Police Scotland and we are committed to working with our partners to reduce the harm it causes and ultimately eradicate it.

Domestic abuse is a despicable and debilitating crime which affects all of our communities and has no respect for ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Police Scotland will not tolerate it.

Police Scotland will proactively target perpetrators and support victims to prevent domestic abuse from damaging the lives of victims and their families.

Police Scotland defines domestic abuse as:

“Any form of physical, verbal, sexual, psychological or financial abuse which might amount to criminal conduct and which takes place within the context of a relationship.

The relationship will be between partners (married, cohabiting, civil partnership or otherwise) or ex-partners. The abuse may be committed in the home or elsewhere including online”

This definition is included in the Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), “*In partnership challenging domestic abuse*” which is a public document that can be found on the [Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/ymzlwhwj/joint-protocol-between-police-scotland-and-copfs-in-partnership-challenging-domestic-abuse.pdf?view=Standard) website or on the [COPFS](http://www.copfs.gov.uk/) website.

## I am writing to request information relating to domestic abuse training and investigations in Scotland since the 2018 act was implemented.

## How long does the training take (Such as hours, days or weeks) and if there is training both at Scotland's police training college (Tulliallan) and on-going in different police stations.

At an operational level, Police Scotland utilises a ‘three tiered approach’ to the policing of domestic abuse: local operational policing, divisional specialist domestic abuse investigation officers and the national Domestic Abuse Task Force. This established ‘three tiered approach’ ensures domestic abuse victims across Scotland receive a police response tailored to the circumstances of their case.

• Tier 1 – Operational Policing.

This is the initial response to reports of domestic abuse and encapsulates almost every report coming into the service. The operational response in Tier 1 will likely include several policing divisions i.e. Contact, Command and Control Division, Local Policing Divisions and Criminal Justice Division.

• Tier 2 – Specialist Domestic Abuse Investigative Officers.

Each Local Policing Division must have specialist officers within the division who support the Tier 1 response. These personnel will ensure effective victim safety planning, maintain an overview of the divisional response, and undertake complex or protracted investigations. They will work cooperatively with the Tier 1 and Tier 3 response.

• Tier 3 – Domestic Abuse Task Force and Domestic Abuse Coordination Unit.

Tier 3 represents the national resource available as part of the Specialist Crime Division. The Domestic Abuse Task Forces (one based in the north, east and west) are responsible for investigations into serial perpetrators who are identified as posing the greatest threat of risk and harm. The Domestic Abuse Coordination Unit are responsible for all national policies in respect of domestic abuse. Both works cooperatively with Tier 1 and Tier 2 of the policing response.

Effective delivery of the ‘three tiered approach’ is supported by a cadre of bespoke and embedded domestic abuse training to ensure domestic abuse victims across Scotland receive a police response tailored to the particular circumstances of their case. This includes but is not limited to Probationer Training, Operation Command Training for newly promoted sergeants and training for Specialist Domestic Abuse Investigators.

Student officers undertaking Initial Training receive several inputs on domestic abuse. These inputs are delivered once to every new course and take place in classrooms, with content and any associated activities facilitated by a class instructor. This comprises a total of 315 minutes delivered in 7 sessions each lasting 45 minutes. These lessons can also be supplemented by Skill Development Exercises where students will be involved / observe an immersive learning situation where they are expected to apply the learning from the classroom environment.

Police Scotland deliver a Domestic Abuse Investigation Course to specialist officers (Tier 2 and Tier 3 level as defined above). This is a comprehensive course taught over a week at the Scottish Police College aimed at officers who have specifically undertaken the role of a domestic abuse investigator. The aim is to enhance officers’ professional knowledge of key areas surrounding domestic abuse investigations and to further their development of appropriate investigative strategies. Officers within specialist domestic abuse units have further specialist training such as for interviewing children (Joint Investigative Interview trained) or investigating sexual offences (Sexual Offences Liaison Officers).

**Continuous Professional Development Modules**

As part of ongoing training a suite of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) modules developed in collaboration with domestic abuse charity, SafeLives Scotland, plus partners to support frontline response to domestic abuse to enable officers to update their knowledge and awareness of dealing with domestic abuse. These launched internally Autumn 2024 and cover, Domestic Abuse and the Effects of Trauma, Diverse Experiences of Domestic Abuse – South Asian Communities, the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act - Understanding and Applying the Legislation, Multiagency Tools for Keeping People Safe, the Use of Technology and Social Media in Domestic Abuse and Domestic Abuse and Children.

**Domestic Abuse Matters (Scotland)**

To support officers and staff in the roll out of the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 the ‘Domestic Abuse Matters (Scotland)’ (DAMS) training was designed and commenced prior to the Act being enacted on 1st April 2019. It provided guidance on the practical issues like evidence gathering and reporting of coercive and controlling behaviours. Specifically, it advances staff and officers’ knowledge of the dynamics of power and control in abusive relationships and tackles the myths and misconceptions which are common in our communities.

The training was delivered using the following structure:

* Pre-learning – an E-Learning package was developed and hosted on the Moodle platform which was completed by circa 18,000 officers and staff. This gave an overview of the new Act and initial training on coercive controlling behaviours.
* Face-to-Face training - this consisted of one day classroom training for circa 14,000 officers and staff. Each session was co-delivered by a Domestic Abuse Specialist and a Police Officer.
* Post course learning materials – materials and PowerPoint presentation hosted on Police Scotland intranet. Further ‘roadshows’ also held in Local Policing Division’s after the Act came into force to ensure the understanding of the local Domestic Abuse specialist officers.

The training was delivered to officers and staff up to and including the rank of Chief Inspector from:

* Local Policing Division officers.
* Local policing public counter staff.
* Contact, Command and Control Division officers and staff, up to and including the rank of Inspector / equivalent.
* Relevant Custody Division officers and staff.

The training was immersive facilitation inputs using a selection of different media. Inputs were delivered on:

* Dynamics of Domestic Abuse / responding to Domestic Abuse.
* Gender and the stages of coercive control.
* Perpetrator tactics.
* Difficulties of leaving.
* The Domestic Abuse Act 2018 and evidence gathering.
* Three videos – fully discussed and de-briefed.

Welfare of officers / staff attending the training was paramount due to the potential lived experience in the classroom. Trainers were alert to the fact that some learners in the room may be emotionally affected by the content through their own experiences of domestic abuse. Trainers would support and signpost any distressed learners to support agencies.

Domestic Abuse is a priority for Police Scotland with the Chief Constable and all members of the Force Executive also undertaking the full face to face training sessions.

A further 750 officers were identified to take on the role of Domestic Abuse Champions and received a further one day face to face training to embed and sustain the learning amongst their peers as well as participating in Continue Professional Development events allowing them to share knowledge/concerns and liaise directly with domestic abuse leads.

## I would like to know when the last time training manuals and materials were updated.

I can advise that Police Scotland does not hold the above requested information.

In terms of Section 17 of the Act, this letter represents a formal notice that information is not held.

By way of explanation, the training materials, including the course objectives of the DAMS training, are a licensed product owned by the College of Policing. To obtain information on when training manuals and materials were updated, we would suggest submitting an FOI to College of Policing: [Freedom of information | College of Policing](https://www.college.police.uk/app/information-management/freedom-information).

## Also has there been any feedback on the either domestic abuse training or the DASA 2018 legislation?

A training evaluation report is available here - [Domestic-Abuse-Matters-Scotland-Evaluation-Report.pdf](https://safelives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Domestic-Abuse-Matters-Scotland-Evaluation-Report.pdf). Finally,

**Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018**

To monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and use of the DASA legislation, section 14 of the Act made provision for a reporting requirement, ensuring accountability. The section places a statutory responsibility on Scottish Ministers to report on use of the offence at section 1(1) of this Act for a 3-year period from coming into force. This report must include information about such matters as the number of cases, the number of convictions, the number of cases involving the child aggravation, the number of cases in which a non-harassment order is made in respect of the victim or a child, the average time taken for proceedings to reach a conclusion and the experiences of witnesses (including child witnesses).

The Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018: interim reporting requirement requires the publication of both statistical information relating to the progress and outcomes of domestic abuse cases in court and information about the experiences of victims and witnesses in domestic abuse cases. The Reporting Requirement period covers the first three years of operation of the Act which is the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2022 - [Supporting documents - Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018: interim reporting requirement - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/domestic-abuse-scotland-act-2018-interim-reporting-requirement/documents/).

The Scottish Government publishes a statistical bulletin providing information on domestic abuse incidents recorded by Police Scotland per financial year. This includes the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018 - [Domestic abuse in Scotland statistics - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/collections/domestic-abuse-in-scotland-statistics/).

Information about Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, including findings and statistics can be found on the Scottish Government website - [2. Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018: shifting understandings of domestic abuse - Domestic abuse court experiences - perspectives of victims and witnesses: research findings - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/domestic-abuse-court-experiences-research-perspectives-victims-witnesses-scotland/pages/5/).

## Finally, how does Police Scotland minimise the impact of police officers using their own personal experience to ensure there is a consistent approach to handling domestic abuse cases?

The [Domestic Abuse Investigation Standard Operating Procedure](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/fuaflohy/domestic-abuse-investigation-sop.pdf) defines the expected policing response to, and investigation of domestic abuse. It supports Police Scotland’s [Domestic Abuse Policy](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/he5ffktq/domestic-abuse-policy.pdf?view=Standard) and the Joint Protocol between Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), ["In Partnership Challenging Domestic Abuse"](https://www.copfs.gov.uk/media/xjtd4i4p/joint-domestic-abuse-protocol.pdf).

If you require any further assistance, please contact us quoting the reference above.

You can request a review of this response within the next 40 working days by [email](mailto:foi@scotland.police.uk) or by letter (Information Management - FOI, Police Scotland, Clyde Gateway, 2 French Street, Dalmarnock, G40 4EH). Requests must include the reason for your dissatisfaction.

If you remain dissatisfied following our review response, you can appeal to the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner (OSIC) within 6 months - [online](https://www.foi.scot/appeal), by [email](mailto:enquiries@foi.scot) or by letter (OSIC, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, KY16 9DS).

Following an OSIC appeal, you can appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law only.

This response will be added to our [Disclosure Log](http://www.scotland.police.uk/access-to-information/freedom-of-information/disclosure-log) in seven days' time.

Every effort has been taken to ensure our response is as accessible as possible. If you require this response to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.